



Human Values

Definitions and Interpretations

VOL. I

Satya Vrat Shastri

HUMAN VALUES
DEFINITIONS AND INTERPRETATIONS

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Publisher's Note

The touchstone of human values sustains life against hostile winds. Historically, values like *paropakāra* (working selflessly for the benefit of others), *ahimsā* (not injuring others), *asteya* (not stealing from others) have been the foundations of ancient Indian society. Today, we live in a wired society. Long-distance families and friendships in a global economy, hedonistic lifestyles, rising incidents of violence towards women and children are real in present times. Where is the anchor for our troubled souls? Where is that touch of solace which stems from the brick and mortar of earthy values? The importance of the topic "Human Values" is immeasurable in today's context to reveal the nectar beyond Facebook and Twitter. This flagship book on Human Values aims to explore such a relevant area as well as the social morass which prevails today.

I must begin writing this note with an expression of my high esteem for Professor Dr. Satya Vrat Shastri. A Jnanpith Laureate in Sanskrit literature, he is the rare combination of the ancient traditions of *pāṇḍitya* as well as the attributes of the modern intellect.

Culture is based on the human value system which moulds its structure. Say, if the structure is strong and energy is applied through it, progress is inevitable. Such a positive force has the capacity to propel a rocket from the

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earth to the moon. But without a proper structure, the rocket simply explodes leading to destruction. The solution lies in developing a structure through *saṅskāra* (refining), which leads to *saṅskaraṇa* (collation) and development of *saṅskṛti* (culture). Culture is like a river with banks stable and new water flows. Value system will keep the banks intact and clean the pollution of the society.

That is the reason why, the significance of this book in my eyes is immense. The effort of Professor Dr. Shastri is unique and unprecedented. The charioteer of this book is himself a great mind with encyclopedic knowledge of scriptures. He has collected gems of wisdom from other learned minds, synthesized them and enriched the book with the elixir of his own wisdom too. Dr. Shastri worked tirelessly on this book with amazing alacrity. It is my heartfelt wish that the precious message of this book spreads everywhere. We still have to work on yet another volume on the same topic. Dr. Shastri is already working on it. It is desirable that this book reaches each and every nook and corner of our society.

This publication on human ethics and ethical literature is a reflection of the publisher's – i.e. the Bharatiya Vidya Mandir's commitment towards excellence. The Bharatiya Vidya Mandir, is already running two schools reflective of its commitment to value education in our society. As the President of the Bharatiya Vidya Mandir, I feel proud to state that we have recently published a book entitled *Cāṇakyanīti* by Dr Satya Vrat Shastri. The book is on the values extolled by Kauṭilya and shares common ground.

The Bharatiya Vidya Mandir has also started a flagship training programme for the underprivileged workers working on different project sites of Simplex Infrastructures. It is a practical exercise in the propagation of Human Values through Guru-Shishya Pratha, as the gurus teach the new pupils the rudiments of the subject.

Whenever I meet Dr. Satya Vrat Shastri at his residence, I have the privilege of meeting his wife Dr. Usha Shastri, an eminent scholar herself and the pleasure of being blessed by her. She is the inspiration and the energy behind the work of the great scholar.

We look forward to your valued feedback on this book.
With earnest regards

Dr. Bithal Das Mundhra
Chairman

Bharatiya Vidya Mandir
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Whenever I meet Dr. Satya Vrat Shastri at his residence, I have the privilege of meeting his wife Dr. Indira Shastri, an eminent scholar herself and the epitome of being pleasant. In her, one is the inspiration and the energy behind the work of the great scholar.

With earnest requests, I look forward to your valued feedback at this point.

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Dr. Satya Vrat Shastri is a well-known scholar and a highly respected leader in the field of Sanskrit and Indian Philosophy. He has authored numerous books and articles on these subjects and has been a frequent speaker at international conferences. His work has been widely recognized and appreciated by scholars and students alike.

Preface

Human values have occupied the mind of thinkers since ages. They have been trying hard to identify the ways to make society run smoothly, to bring civility into it from its primitive animal existence. Every successive generation of thinkers has provided its inputs to it with the result that a whole set of values has emerged out of this continuous mental churning. The set of values has found expression in certain words which serve as a window to them. These words and the thinking that they symbolise make an interesting study which the present monograph seeks to attempt.

Values can be divided into two, one, which are common to all regions and nations and are a core to civilized existence, such as doing good to others, not feeling greedy of others' wealth, causing them no harm, serving fellow beings, standing by them through thick and thin, not robbing them of what is rightfully theirs by means of stealth, robbery and depredation, serving them particularly when they are in distress with loving care. The other, which are peculiar to certain cultures in attracting far greater attention than they do in others, like respect for parents, teachers, guests, physical and moral hygiene, practising continence (Brahmacarya) and control over the senses, avoidance of undue addiction to sensuous objects, seemly behaviour towards servants and slaves, conjugal fidelity, especially on the part of the wife, family cohesiveness stretching up to extended families, obedience to elders to the point of self-abnegation.

Since Sanskrit grew in India, its vocabulary represents both

the types of values, the universal, the world-centric and Indian, the India-centric. It is only in India that respect for teacher has touched all time high equating him with the trinity : *gurur brahmā gurur viṣṇur gurur devo maheśvaraḥ* and the highest creative principle : *guruḥ sāṅkṣāt parabrahma*. It is in India again where parents commanded respect to the point that their circumambulation was equated with the circumambulation of the whole earth with all its seven continents : *pradakṣiṇīkṛtā tena saptadvīpā vasundharā*. It is in India again that the entire universe was conceived as a tiny hamlet, *yatra viśvaṁ bhavaty ekanīḍam* and the whole world as one big family, *vasudhaiva kuṭumbakam*.

While Sanskrit has a good corpus of words for human values, it has two words among them which deserve special notice incorporating as they do all the other values. These are *dharma* and *śīla*. Attempts have been galore to explain them, to expound them, to interpret them, to elaborate them. *Dharma* is sometimes assigned ten characteristics, sometimes five and sometimes even one, the most basic to human existence, *jagataḥ pratiṣṭhā*, the sustainer of the world. It is doing good to others and not causing them any harm, one leads to merit and the other to sin : *paropakāraḥ puṇyāya pāpāya parapiḍanam*, the message of the vast Purāṇic literature : *aṣṭādaśapurāṇeṣu Vyāsasya vacanadvayam*. *Dharma* cultivated leads to *śīla*, civility, the core of human existence. Between them *dharma* and *śīla* sum up human values and what they do to human existence.

Very often words for values are used without appreciating their full sense. The person using them has just a vague idea of what they convey. This is particularly true of such words as are close in sense. It is very difficult to pinpoint the precise distinction in the meaning of words like *dayā*, *kṛpā*, *karuṇā*, *anukampā*, *anukrośa*, *anugraha*, etc. It requires concerted and sustained efforts to unravel this distinction. The first step in this exercise is to trace their definition/s from old Sanskrit literature for that would be a fairly reliable guide to divining the mind of the

ancient thinkers with regard to their precise signification, a daunting task indeed requiring as it does perusal of hundreds of Sanskrit texts with their thousands of pages. Where this help is not forthcoming, it would be worthwhile to take recourse to commentaries and glosses. Where even this were not to help, it would be worthwhile to pick up a whole set of uses and arrive at some conclusion on that basis. Last should come etymology. Recourse to all these measures has been taken in the course of this study with an accent on tracing the definition/s which must have to occupy the pride of place in providing the insight into the mind of the ancients when they used them. Take, for instance, the common word *dāna* used frequently even in the vernaculars. Ask anybody and he would say: simple enough! It is to give, give in charity. But is it what the ancients understood from this? The two definitions of it in the chapter on *dāna* would point out in clear terms as to what they understand from it.

The monograph seeks to explain human qualities /values denoted by Sanskrit words with appropriate illustrations and explanations so that they are properly appreciated.

If the discerning readers find my attempt of use in properly appreciating the Sanskrit vocabulary for human values, I would consider my labours amply repaid.

Before I close I would like to offer my hearty thanks to Dr. B.D. Mundhra, the wellknown industrialist and philanthropist for arranging for the publication of the work under the auspices of the Bharatiya Vidya Mandir, Kolkata whose Chairman he is. I am also thankful to his assistant Shri Shankar Lal Somani for all the help he provided in seeing through the work. Lastly, I would like to thank my esteemed friend Dr. Satya Vrat Varma of Sri Ganganagar (Rajasthan) for going through the proofs and offering valuable suggestions.

—Satya Vrat Shastri

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not for its content it would be worthwhile to take account of
commentaries and notes. When even this work was not to be
worth the while to pick up a whole set of the old and new
at some conclusion on this book I should have expected
References to all these measures are to be taken in the course of
this study with an account of the various methods which must
have to accompany the study of Sanskrit in providing the reader with
the mind of the subject which they need to know. In the
instance the common word used frequently even in the
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The monograph seeks to explain human nature, which
denoted by Sanskrit words with appropriate illustrations and
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If the preceding reader had any doubt as to the propriety
of giving the Sanskrit vocabulary for human nature, I would
consider my purpose amply served.
Before I close I would like to offer my hearty thanks to
H.D. Sharma, the well-known Sanskrit and Hindi scholar,
for arranging for the publication of the work under the auspices
of the Bharatiya Vidya Mandala, Kharagpur, which I consider as
I am also thankful to his assistance. The Sanskrit text is
all the help he provided in securing through the work. I would
would like to thank my respected friend, Mr. V.K. Sharma,
of Sri Ganganagar, Rajasthan, for his kind interest in the work and
offering valuable suggestions.

Introduction

The resolutions, concepts, ideals, and higher expectations give birth to values in society. An overwhelmingly large number of these values like *paropakāra*, doing good to others, *ahimsā*, not causing violence or harm to others, *asteya*, non stealing, *dr̥ḍhasaṅkalpa*, resoluteness, *ekāgratā*, single-minded pursuit of an objective, *akrodha*, not giving way to anger, *viveka*, discrimination, *santulana*, maintaining balance in activities, *deśabhakti*, patriotism are universal. There are some which are limited to a particular region or a country being part of its culture. They would have owed their origin to a particular circumstance or a set of circumstances or a particular environment. They may have something to do with a particular religion that would have laid these down to be strictly followed by its adherents. In Indian ethos the chastity of women is prized the most. Though it may look harsh and incongruous in the modern day context when there is so much of talk of gender parity, the family integrity rests more on the purity of women, they carrying the greater burden in keeping it united and not falling apart unlike its counterpart in the West. In regard and respect they got more than their due share; they were objects of worship; gods rejoice where they are honoured, *yatra nāryas tu pūjyante ramante tatra devatāḥ*, it was said of them; they were and are given the exalted status of *devīs*, goddesses, the word (*devī*) forming part of the names of a number of them. Even while in childhood they were and still are treated as incarnations of Goddess Durgā during the Navarātra days; they are the most

sought after during that period, their feet are washed, they are given new clothes, they are offered some cash and good food. Promiscuity in women the Indian society has frowned upon since time immemorial. To keep up chastity, to be devoted to their husbands has so deeply entered in their psyche that in spite of the avalanche of ultra-modernity invading the Indian society they are not able to come out of it. Or, otherwise how could one explain the sight of hordes of highly educated well-dressed career women, the professionals, observing daylong fast, till the sight of the moon, on the Karvachauth day for the welfare and wellbeing of their husbands. In middle ages when our weak rulers were unable to protect them, Indian women preferred death to surrendering their honour. The practice was called Sati deriving its name from the consort of Śiva in an earlier incarnation who could not stand the insult shown to her husband to which her father had subjected him. In those circumstances this was the life value. But in the changing circumstances, it made no sense to continue with the custom. It owed itself to a particular circumstance and was limited to a particular period only. A few cases of this unseemly practice do come to notice even now but it has nothing to do with saving one's honour as was the case in the past. It has more to do with the show of total identification with the deceased husband without whom life has no meaning. There may also be the ulterior motives of the kin in encouraging the doting women to follow this ghastly practice. Anyway, it is legally banned now. There is no point in talking about it any more. The fundamental point is the protection of women's honour and that has not changed. No society comprises ideal men and women only. It has its share of deviants. Indian society is no exception to it. Violation of a woman's person the Indian society frowns upon. It reserves the harshest condemnation for it. The public outcry against the recent incidents of rape wherein men jostled with women in protest is a case in point. In spite of the loosening of morals, their hold on society on the whole is strong enough to call for strong and vociferous protest. This is

because of the value of women's chastity on which special emphasis is laid in India.

It is for the protection of dignity and honour of women that Islamic society enjoins upon women to be accompanied by male relatives while venturing out. It is again to protect from the lustful gaze of men that it enjoins proper covering of the body by women that includes wearing Hijab and Burquah (a veil, a mantle).

There are certain other values too that are typical of India either in their form or in the emphasis laid on them. One of these is the utmost respect for father, mother and teacher, each one is enjoined to be treated as god, vide the Śikṣāvallī of the *Taittirīya-upaniṣad* where the teacher gives the parting instruction to his pupil on completion of education to treat mother, father and teacher—he includes the guests too among them—as deities, *māṛḍeḍo bhava*, *pitṛḍeḍo bhava*, *ācāryadeḍo bhava*, *atithideḍo bhava*. This is a sublime value which serves as the guiding principle for society to uphold which a person is ready to undergo unimaginable sufferings. It is in line with this that Lord Rāma did not take a second to go in exile to honour the promise his father had made to his step-mother of two boons which were his repairing to forest and stay therein for fourteen years. Even in utmost pain from separation from his dear son who was his very life he did not go back on his promise of boons. He himself did not ask his son to go to forest. It was the step-mother who conveyed this to him on his behalf. Realizing his father's predicament he readied himself to do that which could free him from the sin of renegeing on his word and making him truthful in granting the promised boons, thus setting an example of total obedience to his father, a core value in Indian culture epitomized in inimitable words in the *Rāmāyaṇa* : There is no greater act of virtue than obedience to one's father and carrying out his will (2.19.22). Mother in India is ranked weightier than the earth, *mātā gurutarā bhūmeḥ*, and in importance is said to excel father a thousand times : *sahasraṇi*

hi pitur mātā gauraveṇātiricyate (Bālarāmāyaṇa, 4.30). The teacher is equated with the Divine Trinity, Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Maheśa : *Gurur brahmā gurur viṣṇur gurur devo maheśvaraḥ.* A guest represents in his person all the deities : *atithiḥ sarvadevatāḥ.*

To protect one's honour and not compromise with it is another core value that India has cherished for ages. Maharana Pratap wandered in the forests, his children had to eat the bread of grass but neither did he surrender his dignity nor accept slavery. To do everything possible for protecting *Dharma* is also one of the core values of India. At the age of nine, Guru Gobind Singh inspired his father to sacrifice his life for the sake of *Dharma*. He nurtured the great value – it is better to die in one's own *Dharma* than accept another one's under duress. His seven and nine years old sons preferred death to accepting conversion. After the martyrdom of his other two children in the battlefield Guru Gobind Singh fought with cruel Aurangzeb and his commanders but never conceded defeat. How can one forget the sacrifices of Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev who embraced death willingly for the sake of the motherland. Their values were living life with dignity, love for freedom, protection of *Dharma*, devotion for motherland. These were the people who made the greatest sacrifices for the sake of values and became legendary figures.

To know the Indian values it is necessary to understand their basics. With the gradual development of civilization, the human beings have learnt the art of life better than the animals. Perhaps, the inspiration to live in a group could be the result of self-defence. The spirit of individual self-defence might have changed into group defence. Man might have learnt the importance of life from this doctrine. It might have created faith in life and he might have started to understand the value of his group and society. This was the dawn of his faith in values. In fact, the foundation of these values is enshrined in the Śrutis, the Smṛtis and the Purāṇas. Being an intellectual, human being

started to contemplate about right and wrong, firstly, with the individualistic point of view, then from the point of view of society, finally from the point of view of humanity. Gradually, he left the propriety and impropriety in every sphere of life to his discretion. As for individualistic field he reached the conclusion by reasoning himself but in social matters he debated the point with others. When this value did not go well with different places, time and circumstances he through reflection came to the conclusion that with the change of time, place and circumstances that value needs to be changed. One, therefore, has to accept the importance of time and space. Now, the question is for whom are these values? The answer is for society as a whole. The values that are not beneficial for society, do not deserve to be called values. An important basis of values is their usefulness for the welfare of others. Having said all about society it is time now to reflect on their position in the life of an individual. Should he sacrifice all his values for the welfare of others or should he take the shelter of discretion and think of his own progress too? One thing is clear, whether a person follows his own discretion or not, the values which cannot develop his inner-self, cannot be called values. The following factors constitute the basis of Indian value system:

1. Faith in life
2. Intellectual reflection
3. Enlightenment of environment
4. Welfare of others
5. Individual sublimation or internal development.

To have the knowledge of values in wider sense, they can be divided in different categories. : The physical values, the mental values, the financial values, the ethical values, the social values, the spiritual values and the aesthetic values. The physical values revolve round sound body. Their essential ingredients are healthy, strong, and proportional limbs, glowing face according to age, caste or profession. The mental values are self-strength, self-confidence, dignified bearing, self-reliance, fearlessness,

contentment, patience, determination, compassion and so on. Financial values include earning of wealth through righteous means, spending of it in support of good cause/s, spending economically, using it generously for charitable purposes and not hoarding it. The texts on morality clearly lay down three states of wealth : either donate it or enjoy it or squander it : *dānam bhogo nāśas tisro gatayo bhavanti vittasya*. Ethical values include dutifulness, honesty, dedication, sacrifice, benevolence, service, good conduct, civilized manners, belief in truth, respect for law and order etc. Social values involve amiability, sympathy, co-operation, humanity etc. Political values include love for nation, discipline, celebration of victory. Spiritual values include faith in the Supreme Being, devotion to God, chanting of *mantras*, glorification of god, saying of prayers, search for the path of enlightenment, self-realization and so on. In intellectual values the important ones are imagination, inquisitiveness, scrutiny, investigation, exploration, reflection, creativity, discrimination. The aesthetic values include love of art, love for nature, love for human beauty etc.

This classification or categorization does not mean that the values are not related to each other. In fact, all these values are the branches and the sub branches of a gigantic tree of value of life. It will be easier to choose the values from the same environment where we are placed. The second important question is, there are times when conflicts between two values do occur. How to resolve that situation? There is a famous example for solving it. When a scared cow enters a Hindu street from the fear of a butcher's dagger and at the crossroads the butcher asks you, which way the cow has gone? What should be the answer? If the truth is told, the butcher will kill the cow. This will become the cause of Hindu - Muslim riots. Many lives will be lost. If the butcher is pointed a different direction, that won't be truth. The scriptures enjoin speaking of truth. *satyam vada*, i.e. Speak the Truth.

The Indian scholars have prescribed the answer to the situation where two values are in conflict. *Śrutiḥ smṛtiḥ sadācāraḥ svasya ca priyam ātmanaḥ*.

In the situation of conflict, first of all, one should consult the Vedas, then the *Smṛtis* (Ordinance books) and then the code of conduct. If these three do not provide satisfaction, then one should listen to inner conscience.

It is said elsewhere – *Mahājano yena gataḥ sa panthāḥ*, i.e. the path followed by great men is the right path. Therefore, preference should be given to the values adhered to by the great people. The values championed by them are quite capable of providing the safe way in such conflicting situations.

That there are different values for people of different categories gets support from an Upaniṣadic narrative which runs as follows : Prajāpati had three kinds of sons : gods, human beings and demons. They dwelt with him as resident pupils. After finishing their studies they approached him and said: please give us a sermon. He spoke a single syllable 'da' and asked all of them as to what they had understood by that. The gods said 'da' means *dāmyata*, restrain yourself. The humans said it means *datta*, give, donate. The demons said it means *dayadhvam*, be compassionate. Their answers pleased Prajāpati. He was satisfied that they had comprehended the true import of the enigmatic syllable. He told them that the thundering sound of the clouds *da da da* gives us the message to exercise restraint, to give charity and to be compassionate.

All the three kinds of sons of Prajāpati interpreted the syllable 'da' as it suited them. The gods who have everything that they want need to cultivate restraint. The humans need to be generous, not to appropriate everything to themselves but also to share what they have with others to lead a harmonious life. The demons being ferocious by their very nature have to cultivate the quality of compassion for the smooth working of society.

(*Brhadārṇyaka Upaniṣad*, 5.2)

There are three directions to understand the Indian values.

1. Philosophical Base
2. Social Awareness
3. Individual Character

As a result of penance, sacrifice, service and devotion to the path of self realization, the intellect of India acquired philosophical foundation. All our life style, religion, literature, art, customs and traditions have developed from philosophy. The gigantic tree of entire life, its branches, sub-branches, leaves, flowers and fruits get strength from the elements of this powerful base.

The foundation of Indian values is belief in one unmanifest entity. It is the creator, controller and destroyer of the universe. It has got many names and forms. *Ekam sad viprā bahudhā vadanti*, i.e. it is one but the enlightened, the wise, call it by many names. The enlightened sages imagine its many forms on the basis of nature, beauty and qualities. According to the Indian values only this power is Omnipresent, the Creator and Controller. Being all that, it is incomprehensible through senses. It is beyond the grasp of not only tongue but mind as well. The sages, saints and hermits say that it is only attainable through realization. Possibly, according to Indian values, the great is not he who possesses wealth, intelligence or material prosperity. The great is he who has realized God or who has taken to the path that leads to the realization of God. The scientists have propounded in modern age the theory of cause and effect. Every effect has a cause. The entire universe is in motion, under some system. If there is motion, then there should be an entity that causes motion. That entity is the Unmanifest One. It has got countless names.

The entire universe is in motion under certain laws. These time honoured laws are called *Rta*. These govern all sentient and insentient objects. The sun, the moon, the planets, the stars, the nights, the days, the seasons- winter and summer- the growth of vegetation, the flowering and bearing of fruits by trees and their

perishing, the birth and the childhood, the adulthood, the old age and the death—all are the different aspects of one eternal law. The Indians have deep faith in this eternal law. They pray to live for hundred years. They always make efforts to strike a balance with nature, not to conquer it. They not only respect vegetation but also worship it. They neither desire the immortality of the body nor pray for it because mortality is the natural law. They do not believe that by breaking the laws of nature, they will be able to spend their lives in peace and prosperity.

Human beings are a special part of the Unmanifest Entity. They spring from that entity and dissolve into it. Indians believe in the *aiśāṁsibhāva*, being a part of the entity, *agnisphuliṅgavat*, or being like a spark from fire, *jalabinduvat*, or being like a drop from water, or being *jalataranigavat*, like a wave from water. The spark of fire has all qualities of fire, only the quantity is less. When the spark is in contact with hey or other such stuff, it turns into fire. This is the final aim. In reality, this portion of the human being develops its divinity through change into divinity. The thought of Western philosophy that originally, the human being is neither good nor bad — we can turn him whichever way we wish—does not match Indian thought. In real terms, this belief is the foundation of Indian spiritualism. In fact, due to spiritualism the aim of an Indian is not only to achieve material progress. It can shower upon him endless comforts, but not peace and permanent bliss, the foundation of which is *Dharma* (righteousness) which is the most important feature of Indian life. *Dharma* is the discriminative controlling power which inspires every one to act according to his duty. The scriptures have as *abhyudaya*, the sublime path and as *niḥśreyasa*, the spiritual paths. In fact, *Dharma* is the base of all the values. The edifice of Indian values stands on the foundation of *Dharma*, its expansion we can find in different channels of life-values, which are the means to spend our lives meaningfully. Knowledge, devotion and action are the steps of *Dharma* which human beings follow in right proportion according to their nature,

interest and convenience. Devotion based upon knowledge is accepted as a sublime value of life. To avoid devotion becoming blind faith the base of knowledge is necessary. We cannot sit inactive in such situations. Our diligent involvement in this is necessary. The combination of the three, knowledge, devotion and action produces a salutary effect. The proportion of their combination may change from time to time but the aim does not which is emancipation. That also is of many kinds and has got many connotations like emancipation from worldly sufferings, emancipation from worldly life and unity of God and soul. The aim of Indian life is four fold : *Dharma*, Righteousness, *Artha*, worldly prosperity, *Kāma*, worldly enjoyment and *Mokṣa*, emancipation. *Dharma* is superior to *Artha* and *Kāma* which needs to be observed to control them. It is *Mokṣa* through *Dharma* which is the ultimate end.

If one were to ask what is the backbone of Indian life, one may well say that it is detachment from worldly life. While living in its fullness, *bhujjīthāḥ*, enjoy (it) in a spirit of detachment, *tena tyaktena*, as says the *Īśāvāśopaniṣad*. Wealth is a vital asset to meet the demands of life, it has to be earned through hard work. An ordinary person will have the urge to earn wealth, but this urge has got to be controlled through *Dharma* which means the wealth has to be earned through righteous means. The same way the human desires are countless. We should not use unfair means to fulfill them. Not only that, they have to be given proper direction so that the individual does not go astray. The Upaniṣad explains the point in the most graphic manner. The life, it says, is like a chariot, and the sense organs the horses, the mind the rein, the intellect the chariot-driver. If *Dharma* controls them, they will follow the path of liberation. As soon as the control gets loose they will be out of tune. The entire view of Indian life cannot be better explained than that.

The doctrine of action – *karman*, is another important link in Indian values. Every individual is to get the fruit of his

actions, good or bad. The actions are of three kinds.

On the whole, it can be said that this is the original philosophical base from where the values of Indian life developed. In the long history of our cultural development there are some discordances, there are some exceptions. Nevertheless these values of life provide primarily and principally flow to Indian life.

The efforts for the formation of a healthy society in India were always ongoing. The *Āśrama* system provides the framework for it. Without that the permanence of our society could be in danger. If we take into consideration human society, the system has universal reach. The first twenty five years of life have immense importance for the comprehensive development of a child when he has to advance towards healthy development of body, vital force, mind, intellect and soul. Not only has he to study the scriptures for self realization, he has also to learn some art and craft to earn his future livelihood. It is an appropriate time to enlighten and control his mental energies. For the intellectual development, especially stimulation of discretion, association with enlightened people and preceptors is crucial. Craving for knowledge and clarification of doubts can also be entertained in this environment. This is also the time to learn social manners and build up character. On the whole it can be said that life is built on the values that one acquires at this stage. In olden days these values were easy to acquire by studying in *gurukulas*. Now-a-days a few boarding institutions with programs of inspirational and creative culture do the job. Indians have accepted the comprehensive development of personality in the *brahmacharya āśrama*. Household life (*gṛhastha āśrama*) is accepted as a great opportunity for life. It not only caters to the needs of all the three *āśramas* but also provides for them the necessary wherewithal for life. This immense responsibility one has to carry from the age of twenty five to the age of fifty. It is a prominent span of life where a person enjoys, utilizes and fulfils worldly desires. The worldly possessions and worldly

enjoyments based on righteousness form its foundation. Hereafter, starts the third stage of life where we raise ourselves above the love of family and nurture society with love. We have to show practically our self discipline and contentment. We have to develop the spirit of welfare of others and try to remove the sufferings of others within our efforts with the sense of duty and accomplish it through service. This not only elevates the vision and feelings of a person but also broadens and purifies his inner mind. It smoothenes the path of transition from active worldly life towards detachment. Taking care of the well-being of others and self-development make life more meaningful. *Sannyāsa āśrama* is the last and the fourth stage of a man where he has to detach himself from the desires of the world and to establish a close relationship with the Ultimate Reality. He has to rise above the attachment to children, wealth and fame. Man has natural inclination for fame. Unless he rises above this, he cannot detach himself from the desire for fame. How difficult but straight, easy and natural is the path of inclination towards detachment. In reality when a person from the very beginning adopts the path of detachment from the active attachment to the world this path is easy of access to him. The majority of Indians believe in rebirth. In the last phase of their life they see the possibility of relieving themselves of it. An illiterate villager can remain hungry once a day after hard labour but cannot abandon the desire for liberation. What more can be the value of spiritual life?

The second important social value is the Class System (*Varṇa vyavasthā*). The interest and nature of human beings are not identical. (*bhinnarucir hi lokah*). It is not possible to allot identical work to every one. On the basis of nature the Indian thinkers have divided society into three categories-Pure (*Sātvika*), Passionate (*Rājasika*) and Inferior (*Tāmsika*). The Lord in the *Bhagavadgītā* has categorized society according to Quality and Action, *guṇakarmavibhāvgaṣaḥ* (4.13). Its four classes are : Intellectuals (Brahmins), warriors, protectors or kings (*Kṣatriyas*),

merchants (*Vaiśyas*) and servants, labourers or unskilled workers (*Śūdras*). This division was based on the nature, the efficiency, the ability and the skill of the people. To perform these duties with honesty and dedication is their value of life. The duty of a Brahmin is learning, teaching, reading of scriptures and after reflecting and meditating to set the direction for society and nation. Their life value is to lead life in a simple, humble, pure manner and not to have greed for wealth and power. Kṣatriya has be ready to die for the protection of his country, society, and religion. He is to help maintain order in society. Vaiśya is to earn money through fair means from agriculture, business, industry, trade, commerce and other such means. The Śūdra is to earn his livelihood through service and physical work. Due to social distortions this system came to be accepted on the basis of birth. This created disorder in society but understanding it in the original form, proves the deep thinking that has gone into it.

Where women are honoured there reside angels (*yatra nāryas tu pūjyante ramante tatra devatāḥ*). This emphasizes the immense importance that has been given to women from the ancient time. The women are placed better than men in India. When we pronounce Sītā Rāma, Sītā is placed before Rāma. Not only that, without better half (*ardhāṅginī*) no *yajña*, no sacrament or auspicious ceremony can be completed. It is due to wife, the house is called house (*gṛhiṇī gṛham ucyate*). In the middle ages the ill treatment by foreigners and their evil intentions brought down the respect for women but the noble people and great men of that time who entered the household life, showed tremendous respect to women. Even today in Southern India women are called out of respect Amma. In this culture mother is accepted as the first teacher of a child. In social field she is properly cared for. This is another way of expression of Indian values.

Much of the social cohesion in India owes itself to the self-sacrificing nature of its womenfolk. Their devotion to their husbands had been phenomenal. They would, not unoften, withstand even the deviant behaviour of their husbands but not

give up chastity that could lead to the break-up of the families with catastrophic consequences for the children born into the wedlock who would be rendered rudderless swelling the ranks of the mentally disturbed. They would also exercise a sobering influence on their menfolk restraining them, in their own way, within their limits, from following an unrighteous path. Joint family system being the norm than the exception, something that persists even to the present day in more traditional of the families though withering fast under the impact of the modern technological and scientific pressures and the Western influence that is sweeping across the subcontinent- the women would serve the elders, the in-laws. In all nobility they were the mainstay of the family. To care for the elderly was the norm for the menfolk too which would ensure their providing for not only their material needs but also their emotional ones precluding them from being treated as caste-outs. An old stanza beautifully sums up the sum total of behaviour of a daughter-in-law of a family:

*abhyutthānam upāgate gṛhapatau tadbhāṣaṇe namratā
tatpādārpitadr̥ṣṭir āsanavidhis tasyopacaryā svayam/
supte tatra śayīla tatprathamato jahyāc ca śayyām iti
prācyaiḥ putri niveditāḥ kulavadhūsiddhāntadharmā amī/
(Bālarāmaṇa, 4.43)*

“To be up to receive the lord of the house as he arrives, humility in speaking to him, to fix the sight on his feet, to offer him a seat, to serve him herself, to sleep after he has gone to bed and to leave the bed before he does so, O daughter, these are the determining principles the ancients have laid down for the daughters-in-law of a good family”.

Control of avarice and development of the spirit of renunciation may not be the typical Indian values but the emphasis laid on them is. In the code of ethics for the physicians the value of control of avarice, *alolupatā*, finds special mention. The respect accorded to the ascetics far outweighs that shown

even to kings and emperors, they falling at their feet and repairing to them for advice and succour in times of adversity. Their *tapas*, penance, was considered the best means for social weal.

Sacraments (ceremonies) have got a special place in Indian society. By performing them we not only emphasize their significance but also try to motivate the inner self towards sublimity. Out of our sixteen sacraments, like our life values some are for worldly life while others are for emancipation. Whereas birth, sacred thread and marriage sacraments are full of rejoicing, there are funeral rites (*antyeṣṭi saṁskāra*) which give the message that there is nothing permanent in life. In the ceremonies the presence of society is the evidence that the human beings forget their own comforts and sorrows and take part in the comforts and sorrows of others. It expands the human society. In sadness, sympathy reduces grief, in rejoicing it increases happiness. Are these values of less significance?

Indian life attaches importance to goals but more of it to means to achieve them. Unfair means cannot lead to fair ends. For a while it may appear otherwise but in reality it is not so. Whatever our aim, whether the acquisition of wealth, status, fame, or any other material gain, fair means are of particular value. Even in wars a strict code of conduct was followed. Not unoften they were fought for protection of *Dharma* and were rightly called *Dharmayuddha*.

In Indian value system the inner aspect is more important than the outer. Vital breath is more important than the body. Cleanliness of clothes is better but more important is who is wearing them. Therefore, Vivekananda told the newly-wedded couple in a foreign country that "in your country a tailor makes a person civilized and cultured but where I come from, there sublime character makes a person cultured". Where righteousness in true sense is missing, the rituals take over. It is due to this that Buddhism and Jainism took birth. Again in the middle ages, to oppose these ostentations saints like Kabir took birth. They

established the true essence of life. In the literature of this land language, prosody, rhetoric have got their own importance but sentiments (*Rasa*) are accepted as the soul. In sculpture or painting the art of presentation is there but more important is the end to which it is put. The depiction has to be there, *satyam* but it has also to be *śivam* and *sundaram*, sublime and exquisite.

Balance is another quality of Indian values. The balance of idealism and realism, balance of internal and external, balance of intellect and emotions, balance of righteousness and actions, balance of enjoyment and sacrifice, balance of this world and the next (after death), balance of thoughts and emotions, balance of truth and reality, balance of rights and duties, balance of family and society, balance of art and literature, balance of community and country, balance of motherland and foreign country, balance of wealth and enjoyment, balance of human being and nature. Therefore balance has got special significance in every aspect of life. This balance shows an appropriate combination which decides propriety of life. Just as in nature there is appropriate ratio of purity, passion and darkness which bring into motion the natural laws of the universe in the same way works the combination in the lives of beings. Therefore, in its literature we see the right proportion of sentiments, thoughts and expressions. If there is a unique combination of colours in painting, there is also the unique raising and the lowering of voice in music. The credit for adding multiple beauty to Indian art and craft goes to maintaining the right proportion.

Indians basically believe in diligent life. Being believers in the philosophy of action they know that they will get definitely the fruits of their actions, may be immediately, may be later. This protects them from unnecessary pessimism and provides them contentment. Some of the values preferred by Indian society are as under.

An Indian has not only regard for cow and Brahmin (scholar), he has reverence for them. He might not have full faith in the Vedas, the Purāṇas and the Smṛitis and other scriptures but he

has certainly regard for mother, father, preceptor and the elderly. This regard motivates him to serve them which for him is a joy forever. The service may or may not be material (that depends upon the resources with him) but mental certainly it is. This is the only way to pay the debt that he owes to mother, father and God.

A student should always remain humble, caring and strive for knowledge. He should acquire knowledge through constant practice. Even to think of comfort is no good for him. He has not only to obtain knowledge, he also has to learn good conduct from his preceptor. Then alone he can become a civilized, cultured citizen. Indian society values more a person of good conduct than a scholar, a man of letters.

For the inculcation of good qualities, children are given good and meaningful names. Indians believe in the unity of name, beauty and shape. Therefore study of noble doctrines, noble actions and noble company have got special meaning for them. A proper environment that leads to noble actions and through them to sublime character is the foundation on which stands the edifice of Indian value system.

Rising at dawn is considered propitious. The tranquil environment at dawn automatically gives birth to righteous thoughts. Perhaps, this is why the Indians pray and meditate at dawn. For the comprehensive development of personality the pure and healthy body is important. In the morning an Indian purifies the body through bath. The exercise makes his body healthy. After paying respect to elders, and seeking their blessing not only does he develop the spirit of humility he also keeps alive the spirit of service and faith. By performing *yajña* he ensures the purification of his abode, and keeps the mind and intellect clean. He firmly believes in using his hard earned money to enjoy the simple, pure and wholesome food. This food provides nourishment to his subtle body along with minute mind as well. Impure food cannot produce pure mind. Therefore it is not acceptable to an Indian. He has discriminated between what he should consume and what not.

Hospitality is a special feature of Indian life. A guest is looked after with great care and his blessings are always cherished. In this there is more a sense of dedication and thoughtfulness than formality. According to our values a person should go to that house where he commands respect. To care for the old and sick is our humanitarian duty. It should be done in all humility and selflessness. The service which generates ego has no place in Indian life. Donation should be given with honesty and selflessness. Whether this donation is of wealth, labour, knowledge or service, it should be given to worthy people and preferably anonymously. Advertisement of donation or charity or taking credit for it generates arrogance and brings down one's fame : *kīrtir hrasati kīrtanāt*. The gift of knowledge is considered the supreme gift: *sarveṣāṃ eva dānānāṃ vidyādānaṃ viśiṣyate*.

There is no room for exotic exhibition while there is one for good taste and elegance. Character in India has more value than the make of clothes. Respect for elders and humility within are what need to be cultivated. Elders need to be treated with respect and their blessings sought. While addressing them one should keep in mind four things: one should not speak unless asked to, one should talk sweet, one should use good expression, one should talk good. The method to tell should better be pleasant. One should not remain out for long in the night. One should go to bed early and rise early.

In mountains like the Himālayas, rivers like the Ganges, towns like Banaras and scriptures like the Vedas and the Purāṇas we Indians have great faith. We revere them.

The most important notion in Indian life is the sublimity of individual character. Virtuous conduct is the supreme *dharma* (*ācāraḥ paramo dharmah*). It is not important what doctrine one believes in, important it is one's conduct. Religion, actions, class, caste, province, language or nation of a person do not reveal his greatness, his virtuous conduct does. Therefore, even when a person practises the majority of the aforesaid values, his

individual conduct should be in consonance with *Dharma* as defined by Manu :

*vidvadbhiḥ sevitaḥ sadbhir nityam adveṣarāgibhiḥ/
hrdayenābhyanuññāto yo dharmas taṁ nibodhata//*

“Learn that sacred law which is followed by men learned (in the Veda) and assented to in their hearts by the virtuous, who are ever exempt from hatred and inordinate affection.” This *dharma* steals the palm. Manu's explanation of *dharma* is :

*dhr̥tiḥ kṣamā damo 'steyam śaucam indriyanigrahaḥ/
dhīr vidyā satyam akrodho daśakam dharmalakṣaṇam//*

“Contentment, forgiveness, self-control, abstention from unrighteously appropriating anything, (obedience to the rules) of purification, coercion of the organs, wisdom, knowledge (of the supreme soul) are the tenfold characteristics of *dharma*. Proceeding further says Manu:

*daśa lakṣaṇāni dharmasya ye viprāḥ samadhīyate/
adhītya cānuvartante te yānti paramāṁ gatim//*
(*Manusmṛti*, 6.93)

“Those Brāhmaṇas who thoroughly study the tenfold law, and after studying obey it, enter the highest state.”

Lord Kṛṣṇa in the *Gītā* expands it (*dharma*) to twentyfold while the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* expands it to thirtyfold. A person who inculcates the virtues comprising this law (*dharma*) frees himself from worldly vices like lust, anger, greed, jealousy, ego and so on and realizes his true strength and potentiality.

Just as the law (*dharma*) is elaborated with pinpointing the number of virtues that go with it, as mentioned above, it is reduced progressively with the focus on the first four, *ahimsā*, abstention from injuring (creatures); *satya*; truthfulness; *asteya*, abstention from unlawfully appropriating (goods of others) and control of the organs *indriyanigraha* and finally just to one, the most basic of all : *ātmanah pratikūlāni pareṣāṁ na samācaret*,

“one should not do to others what one would not like to be done to oneself by others.”

There is much talk of gender sensitization these days. Women are subject to much unwarranted indignity. This is because of the non-observance of the most elevating of the values of looking at other women as mothers, *mātr̥vat paradāreṣu*. Just as it is with women, so it is with wealth; there being a lot of misappropriation of it with the non-observance of the principle of looking at the wealth of others as clods of earth, *paradr̥vyēṣu loṣṭavat*.

With the inculcation of these values a person would be chastened and listening to his inner voice would be able to lead a life of fearlessness, *akutobhaya*, the life that would provide him with peace and tranquillity.

An oft-repeated charge against Indian thinking is that it is far too individual-centric. There is emphasis in it on one's own upliftment, the craving for material, mental and spiritual upliftment, the upliftment to the point of attaining salvation. This is a fallacy that needs to be corrected. The Indian value system takes care not only of an individual human being but also of all human beings; not only all human beings but also of all beings. One is to occupy one's thoughts to the wellbeing of all beings : *sarvabhūtahite rataḥ*; not only beings but also all things, sentient and non-sentient. The Indians pray:

*sarve bhavantu sukhinah sarve santu nirāmayāḥ/
sarve bhadraṇi paśyantu mā kaścid duḥkham āpnuyāt//*

“May all be happy, may all be free from ailments or diseases. May all experience good things. May no one come to grief”.

It is in India that the earth is accorded the status of mother. In the *Ṛthivīsūkta* of the *Atharva-veda* the ṛṣi says that the earth is his mother, *mātā bhūmiḥ* and he is her son, *putro*’ ham *ṛthivyāḥ*. It is in India that forgiveness is begged of the earth

for setting foot on it, the mother, the adored and the revered:

*samudraraśane devi parvatastanamaṇḍale/
viṣṇupatni namas tubhyaṁ pādakṣepaṁ sahasva me||*

“O ye the goddess, the wife of Viṣṇu, O ye, with the oceans as the girdle and the mountains as the expanse of thy breasts, bear ye setting of my foot on thee.”

The same kind of forgiveness is begged of a tree by a carpenter for felling and sawing it for the wood for fashioning doors and windows of the house:

*yānīha bhūtāni vasanti tāni
balim grhītvā vidhivat prayuktam/
anyatra vāsaiṁ parikalpayantu
kṣamantu te cādya namo'stu tebhyaḥ//*

“Whatever beings have taken up abode in it, may they take leave after accepting the offering made to them in all propriety and take up abode elsewhere. May they forgive me. I bow to them.”

There is so much of talk of protection of environment these days. In this connection it will not be out of point to refer to an episode figuring in the *Mahābhārata*. Once while King Pṛthu was on the throne, the earth went to Lord Brahmā and complained to Him that the king was tormenting her. On being summoned, the king told Him that he was doing so because the earth was not yielding sufficient food for his subjects. In self-defence the earth said that it was so because the subjects had far too much exploited her upper crust with the result that her productivity had declined. Lord Brahmā then asked the earth to assume the form of a cow and supply the milk to the subjects to hold on. This went on well for a time. After a while Pṛthu went to the Lord again and told Him that the subjects were feeling uneasy because they wanted shelter. The Lord advised that they could dig into the earth but then the digging has to be done gently without hurting the earth too much.

The episode highlights the concern of the Indians for soil erosion for that is the hurting of the upper crust.

The Purāṇic episode of Lord Kṛṣṇa killing the serpent Kālīya exemplifies the concern of the Indians for preventing water pollution for, as goes the episode, the serpent was emitting poison into the water of the river. There are special injunctions in the Smṛti texts not to spit in the river water and not also to defecate near it. The left-overs of the food were in no case to be thrown in the river water. So was not to be any other effluent. That was to ensure clean and healthy water.

The ancient Indians were far too conscious that while they need environment, the environment too needs them. This is expressed tellingly in a *Mahābhārata* verse which says that without a forest cover the tiger is slain and without a tiger the forest is felled:

nirvano vadhyate vyāghro nirvyāghraṁ chidyate vanam.

The entire approach of Indians to environment has been that of devotion, reverence, compassion and gratitude. This has helped them solve the environmental problems in a friendly manner. They want peace and harmony in every particle of the environment as indicated by their plentiful prayers in that direction, one of which, an oft-repeated one, from the *Atharva-veda* begs for peace on the earth, the mid-regions, the waters, the herbs, the plants and so on. Peace and peace everywhere :

*dyauḥ śāntiḥ prthivī śāntiḥ apah śāntiḥ osadhayaḥ śāntiḥ....
śāntiḥ eva śāntiḥ.....*

It is the consideration for values that has sustained Indian society all through. India is known primarily for them. Some of them are eternal, some are evolved by Indians reflecting as they do Indian ethos. It is unfortunate that due to certain reasons the regard for them is diminishing in present day India.

This needs filip by underlining their importance in correcting many an anomaly that has crept in Indian society robbing it of much of its sheen. The present book is dedicated to that end.

Ahimsā

Nonviolence

Ahimsā paramo dharmaḥ, non-violence is the supreme virtue, is a quadrant of a stanza that has gained wide currency in India. It is not from any text of the *Jainas* who profess non-violence as the cardinal principle. Of all the works it occurs in the *Mahābhārata*. The context is the query of Yudhiṣṭhira to Bhīṣma on a bed of arrows among a series of queries that form the subject matter of the *Anuśāsanaparvan* as to in what way a man is relieved of sorrow while absolving himself of violence in word, deed and thought, the non-violence which are abstinence from violence in mind, word, thought and eating, pointing out *inter alia*, that it has to be practised on all the four counts. Abstinence from violence even on one count or on just three would not do. This he illustrates with a telling simile. A quadruped is not able to sustain itself on just its three legs. Going on further he says that just as the one foot of an elephant covers in itself the feet of (many) smaller beings, in the same way all good deeds are inherent in non-violence. This is where non-violence stands. Now, meat-eating has to be avoided. This has to be preceded by three stages. A person has to take on a resolve that he is not going to have meat. That is the mental abstinence. Then he has to say that he is not going to have meat, no meat of whatever kind, not that he would not have this type or that type of meat, just as some people say that they would not have beef or pork, but would not mind mutton or chicken or fish

and the third, that he would not indulge in killing beings himself. That is the abstinence from violence in deed; the deed to satisfy the palate. Bhīṣma then follows it up with strong denunciation of meat-eating. Those who recount good points of meat-eating; there is and has been no dearth of them; that it supplies protein to the body, that it improves health by adding to its vigour and adds to weight [vide the frequently quoted adage : *māṁsaṁ māṁsena vardhate*, (flesh grows with flesh)] etc. do so out of sheer satisfaction of their palate. This recounting of benefits of meat-eating by them results in evil and doom. History furnishes instances, says Bhīṣma, where good people have sacrificed their own life and bartered their own flesh for the flesh of others, *svamāṁsaṁ paramāṁsena paripālya*, and attained heaven, *divaṁ gatāḥ*. This is Bhīṣma's description of *ahimsā* that in spite of all the emphasis on it leaves Yudhiṣṭhira unconvinced. He is not able to make out as to how to reconcile the contradictory statements of Bhīṣma in proclaiming time and again *ahimsā* to be the supreme virtue, *paramo dharmah*, and at the same time speaking of *Śrāddha* being performed with the offering of different types of meat, the manes, *pitṛs*, being fond of the same. How can meat be obtained without killing, argues he. Not to kill and to offer meat would cancel each other out. He is assailed with doubt in the virtue of avoiding meat about which Bhīṣma had spoken of earlier, *jāto no saṁśayo dharme māṁsasya parivarjane*. He wants him to explain as to what good it would do to avoid eating meat and what it would do not to do so. Moreover, how would all this *himsā* in the form of meat-eating measure up: One who kills the beings and eats their meat; one who eats the meat offered by others and finally, one who buys meat to eat. Yudhiṣṭhira wants clarification from Bhīṣma on all these points. Bhīṣma in answer to this waxes eloquent on the virtues of abstinence from eating every kind of meat. The first question of Yudhiṣṭhira was as to what good it does to avoid eating meat. Bhīṣma's answer to this is that it leads to the

development of good figure with no deformity in limbs and increases life span and adds to intellect and mental and physical strength as also memory. So good is avoiding eating meat that it equals performance of Aśvamedha every month. It is very difficult to abstain from meat after having tasted it. One who does so has all that the Vedas and other scriptures would not provide him. *Ahimsā* is the greatest virtue. It is the severest of the penances, it is the supreme truth. It is from it that *dharma* flows forth:

*ahimsā paramo dharmaḥ tathā 'himsā paramaṁ tapaḥ/
ahimsā paramam satyaṁ yato dharmah pravartate//*

Now, the second question of Yudhiṣṭhira was as to what harm it brings to eat meat. Bhīṣma's answer to this is that meat is not obtained from grass or wood or stone, it is obtained by killing a being. So, bad it is to partake it: *tasmad doṣas tu bhakṣaṇe*. Bhīṣma here makes a very interesting point. If there were no meat-eaters there would be no butchers. Butchers exist because there are buyers of meat from them. One who eats meat of beings struggling for life, whether slaughtered or dead, is a butcher himself. There is no distinction between a butcher who slaughters an animal by tying it and killing it and one who buys its flesh by paying for it as also one who relishes it. It is slaughter, slaughter of three kinds, *esa trividho vadhaḥ*.

It is the second time here that Bhīṣma makes an interesting point. He makes a reference to old times when people created an animal of rice, *vrihimayaḥ paśuḥ*, and offered it as *bali* in sacrifices, *yajñas*. Now, the animals before they are sacrificed have to be besprinkled (with water, *prokṣita*, according to prescribed rites) and it is then that their meat is partaken of, such is the ruling of Vasu, the ruler of Cedi in answer to the query of seers of his time. Bhīṣma then enumerates seasons, months and periods when meat should be avoided. Even this much of abstinence would do good according to him for that also involves giving up something that is difficult to forego.

Bhīṣma at this point produces a long list of kings of old who had abstained from eating meat and found a place for themselves in heaven. The great sons, says he, who follow the excellent practice of non-violence and abstain from meat and wine from their very birth are accepted as sages. At this point Bhīṣma's strong advocacy of abstinence from eating meat takes on the colours of a panegyric, *stotra*, with the usual *phalaśruti*, the end-benefits following it : Whosoever follows the regimen of not eating meat or would recite the panegyric of abstention from meat to others would in no case repair to hell however bad in conduct he may be. Any one who were to go through it (the panegyric) which enjoins abstinence from eating meat or were to listen to it repeatedly gets reprieve from all sins and has all his wishes fulfilled:

*paṭhed vā ya idam rājan śṛṇuyād vā 'py abhikṣṇasāḥ/
vimuktaḥ sarvapāpebhyaḥ sarvakāmair mahīyate//*

The *stotra*, however, is not the end of the discussion between Yudhiṣṭhira and Bhīṣma about meat-eating. Yudhiṣṭhira is not able to make out as to why people should go in for eating meat when all the different types of pies, vegetables and sweetmeats are available to them. If they still do so, it means that to them there is nothing more worthy of relish than meat. He wants Bhīṣma to further elaborate on the advantages of eating meat and abstaining from it. Bhīṣma agrees with Yudhiṣṭhira in meat being the most worthy of relish of the food items. It has its utility for the wounded, the emaciated, the tormented and those with rustic routine and weighed down with travel fatigue. It infuses breath instantly and adds considerably to physical strength. As food nothing can match it. But then there is no reason that one should fall for it. One who wants to add to his flesh with the flesh of others is the meanest of the mean and the most cruel of the cruel. There is nothing more dear in the world than life. If one does not want to lose one's life, there is no reason as to why he should want to take the life of others. He has to be as

considerate to them as he is to himself. To abstain from meat is virtue while to eat it is vice.

Now comes the rider. There is no harm, says Bhīṣma, in eating meat by following Vedic procedure. The Śruti ordains that it is for sacrifices, the *yajñas*, that animals were brought into being. Not only that, it is a different rule for the Kṣatriyas who may have to put their own life to risk in killing animals which may be wild enough to attack them. Hunting, therefore, is no taboo for them. It is for this reason that Agastya spoke well of the same. Killing in the course of hunting does not incur sin.

But these are only exceptions. Bhīṣma reverts to his old theme of being merciful to beings. No being wants to die. Then why not spare its life?

Ahimsā, non-killing of beings, Bhīṣma concludes, is supreme virtue, supreme self-restraint, supreme charity, supreme penance, supreme sacrifice, the best fruit, the best friend and the best form of happiness. It represents charity in all kinds of sacrifices, the dip in all the holy tanks. The fruit of all kinds of charity cannot equal it. It is not possible to recount its virtues even through hundreds of years, concludes Bhīṣma:

*ahimsā paramo dharmas tathā 'himsā paro damaḥ/
ahimsā paramaṁ dānam ahimsā paramaṁ tapaḥ//
ahimsā paramo yajñas tathā 'himsā paramaṁ phalam/
ahimsā paramaṁ mitram ahimsā paramaṁ sukham//
sarvayajñeṣu vā dānaṁ sarvatīrtheṣu vā plutam/
ahimsāyānāhi śakyā guṇā vaktuṁ varṣaśatair api//*

Himsā or violence could be committed by mind, word and deed, *manovākkāya*. To abjure it in all of its three manifestations is what *ahimsā* is. The basic idea is not to cause hurt or injury to a being. Killing or maiming is too obvious to need any explanation. Mental violence is causing hurt to a person by thinking ill of him which releases bad waves that do have their fall out. Though not possible of explanation scientifically, the ill-feeling, the silent curses cannot but have their impact on the

person on whom they are pronounced. The *vācika hiṁsā*, the verbal violence is to abuse a person, to speak ill of him to his very face, to denounce and denigrate him. The *Mahābhārata* furnishes a very interesting example of it in the *Karṇaparvan* when Arjuna repairs to the camp of Yudhiṣṭhira in the company of Kṛṣṇa to enquire of his well-being having come to know from Bhīma of the wounds inflicted on him by Karṇa who had slain in battle with him his charioteer and blown off his diadem making him and his brother Nakula suffer the same fate while mounting the chariot of his other brother Sahadeva in full view of his own and his adversary's armies much to his discomfiture. Bhīma had advised Arjuna to see Yudhiṣṭhira while he would stave off Karṇa in the meantime. Yudhiṣṭhira in writhing agony over his blows and in extreme anger mistook the glow on the face of Arjuna that in reality was due to the defeat inflicted by him on the redoubtable Saṁśaptakas hordes of whom he had slain as due to his having killed Karṇa as a revenge for his ill-treatment of him (Yudhiṣṭhira). He started singing peans of him. Arjuna told him that he had come to enquire of his well-being after Bhīma had conveyed to him all that had befallen him and that Karṇa was still alive and was still to be dealt with. Yudhiṣṭhira at this lost his cool and shot forth a volley of sharp words on him speaking ill in his all round denunciation of him even of his bow Gāṇḍīva which he said he could well pass on to some one else more competent which made Arjuna draw out his sword. Kṛṣṇa who could read his mind noticing the unexpected turn of events asked Arjuna as to what he was up to and why he had pulled out his sword. Arjuna told him that he had taken a vow in secret that he would break the head of one who would tell him to hand over his bow to some one else. This was precisely what his elder brother Yudhiṣṭhira had said. He would now have to lose his head. Kṛṣṇa told Arjuna that he would be able to redeem his pledge by pouring scorn upon Yudhiṣṭhira and thoutheeing him. A person is thought to be alive only till he gets respect. If insulted, he is taken to be as good as dead even

though alive. Moreover, a senior person when addressed as thou, *tvam*, is killed. Arjuna followed Kṛṣṇa's advice, heaped insult on Yudhiṣṭhira holding him responsible for all his and his brothers' miseries and the death and destruction caused by his misdeeds starting with the game of dice. Arjuna spoke in this strain for long. After that he again drew out his sword, this time to kill himself having been struck with remorse at his misdemeanour in insulting his revered brother to his face. Kṛṣṇa noticing the sword again and after ascertaining, though he knew it quite well, as to what Arjuna was up to, advised him to indulge in self-praise which would mean killing himself in expiation for all that he had spoken. Arjuna does as advised and saves the situation from taking an ugly turn.

The moral of the above episode as it emerges is that it is *himsā*, violence not only by means of arms and ammunition but by words also that has to be eschewed along with the mental and physical one. To insult through violent words is verbal *himsā*. To indulge in self-praise, in self-aggrandizement, is violence against one's own self. To avoid both these types of verbal violence, *vācika-himsā*, is *ahimsā*. A resort to this violence prevented the more ghastly spectacle of physical violence that would have led to very unsavoury consequences for the Pāṇḍavas. If only Yudhiṣṭhira could have avoided this violence, the episode as described above, would not have filled the pages of the *Mahābhārata*. And if only—and that is a big if — Draupadī would have practised somewhat of this non-violence by not allowing by now infamous words escape her lips; the progeny of the blind are blind; the *Mahābhārata* war would not have taken place at all!

Formed from the *√hisi* assigned the meaning *himsā*, violence in Pāṇini's *Dhātupāṭha*, a meaning recorded through the derivative of the root itself (a tough reminder of the difficulty of finding an equivalent word to convey its exact sense), with the augment *num* (*n*) because of its *i*-ending by Pān. *idito num dhātoḥ* (7.1.58) and the Kṛt suffix *a* by Pan. *guroś ca halaḥ* (3.3.103),

the suffix *tāp* (*a*) in the feminine by Pāṇ. *ajādyataṣ tāp* (4.1.4) with the negative *na* (= *a* with the loss of *n*, vide Pāṇ. *nalopo nañah*, 6.3.73), the word *ahimsā* means literally the absence of *himsā*, violence or non-violence, non-injury or non-hurt of any kind. All along it has enjoyed primacy among human values. It is the first among the five that Manu enjoins for all the four castes:

*ahimsā satyam asteyam śaucam indriyanigrahaḥ/
etaṁ sāmāsikaṁ dharmam cāturvarṇye 'bravīn manuḥ//*¹

“Annihilation of killing propensities, veracity (truthfulness), abstention from unlawfully appropriating (the goods of others), purity and subjugation of senses Manu has declared as the summary of law for the four castes.” The *Liṅga-purāṇa* defines it as

*ātmavat sarvabhūtānāṁ hitāyaiva pravartanam/
ahimsaiṣā samākhyātā yā cātmajñānasiddhidā//*²

“That is said to be *ahimsā* which consists of applying oneself to the welfare of all beings treating them as if they were one’s own self. It is this which leads to attainment of self-knowledge.”

This is one of the most positive of descriptions of *ahimsā* in Sanskrit literature. It has nothing of negative here; not to kill, not to injure, not to harm, not to hurt. It is to treat others as one’s own self. With this done, no violence, injury, harm or hurt would be possible. No one would like to subject oneself to all these. Rightly says the *Śābarabhāṣya* : *na kasyacit pratikūlam ācarati ahimsakaḥ*⁴, “a non-violent person does not go against anybody.” The *Liṅga-purāṇa* definition above goes into the spirit of *ahimsā* and uplifts it from a mere mundane phenomenon to a higher intellectual and spiritual one. *Ahimsā* then becomes all-inclusive and all-pervasive. No wonder then that it is perceived as supreme law, *paramo dharmah*.⁵

As the governing principle of Cosmic Order it has won

fulsome praise from sages and seers, thinkers and philosophers, men and women of reason all through the ages in India. Do not kill this biped animal⁶, the animal with a single hoof, the cow and the horses and the men, declares the Śruti⁷. Since the intent to kill arises, mostly among humans out of a feeling of animosity and hostility, the Śruti enjoins to keep off from these. "May none be hostile to me⁸, may people be not inimical to each other⁹." Says it

"Do not kill each other", says the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*.¹⁰

Another definition of *ahiṃsā* that Sanskrit literature throws up is in the *Yogasārasaṅgraha* of Vijñānabhikṣu. It reads:

*karmaṇā manasā vācā sarvabhūteṣu sarvadā/
akleśajananaṁ proktā tv ahiṃsā paramarṣibhiḥ*//¹¹

"Not to ever cause affliction to all beings in deed, thought and word is said to be *ahiṃsā* by the supreme sages."

It covers everything, the *dharma* and the *artha* just as all the feet are covered by the feet of an elephant:

*sarvāṇy evāpidhīyante padajātāni kuñjare/
evam sarvam ahiṃsāyām dharmārtham apidhīyate*//¹²

There is no expiation, *prāyaścitta* for killing of beings. The sacrifices would fail to wash the sin, however effective. The muddy water cannot be washed away by mud or wine with wine, says the *Bhāgavata*.¹³

Whatever is obtained through destroying beings should be avoided for that destroys the Lokas.¹⁴

It is *ahiṃsā* which is a fountain of nectar in the desert called the world: *ahiṃsaiva saṁsaramarāv amṛtasaṁh*.¹⁵ It does go to all the beings as would a mother. It is a rainy mass of clouds for the forest conflagration of sorrows, it is the best medicine for those who are tormented by the disease of the cycle of births.¹⁶ The sages proclaim *ahiṃsā* to be the doorway to *dharma*: *ahiṃsā dharmasya dvāram uktam maharṣibhiḥ*,¹⁷ for that is the evidence for *dharma*: *ahiṃsālakṣaṇa*,¹⁸ which would mean that

one practising it is *dhārmika*, one who follows *dharma*, for what is *dharma* without *ahimsā*? All beings strive to keep their life and soul together. There is nothing more dear to beings in the world than their life. It is impossible to count the virtues of one who, the virtuous one, full of compassion having undertaken the vow of non-violence provides the beings the safety of their life:

*prāṇānām parirakṣaṇāya satatam sarvāḥ kriyāḥ prāṇinām
prāṇebhyo 'py adhikam priyam samastajagatām nāsty eva
kiñcit priyam/*

*puṇyam tasya na śakyate gaṇayitum yaḥ pūrṇakāruṇyavān
prāṇānām abhayaṁ dadāti sukṛtī teṣāṁ ahimsāvratāḥ//¹⁹*

Though in general the principle is that one is to keep away from *himsā*, violence, it is wanton killing which is particularly frowned upon. One who kills animals for no reason himself gets killed in as many births after death as there are hair on the animal's body:

*yāvanti paśuromāṇi tāvat kṛtvā hi mārāṇam/
vṛthā paśughnaḥ prāpnoti pretya janmani janmani//²⁰*

Manu further says that one who kills innoxious beings for his own pleasure never finds happiness in this life and the next:

*yo 'himsakāni bhūtāni hinasty ātmasukhecchayā/
sa jīvaṁś ca mṛtaś caiva na kvacit sukham edhate//²¹*

There are two expressions in the above stanza that deserve special notice. They are *ahimsakāni bhūtāni*, the innoxious beings and *ātmasukhecchayā*, for one's own pleasure. By emphasizing abstinence of violence against innoxious beings, the beings that cause no harm, Manu seems to imply that the same may not be impermissible against the harmful and the violent ones, understandably enough, for, if not killed they would kill, flesh being their diet ordained by nature. This is precisely the point that the hawk, (Indra in disguise) makes against affording protection to the pigeon (Agni in disguise—

both the deities out to test the righteousness of Śibi) by Śibi with whom it (the pigeon) had taken shelter and who would not part with it having been assured protection. The killing of wild animals becomes a necessity when they are on the prowl. If they enter a village and are out to devour its innocent inhabitants, the only means to save the latter's lives is to shoot them down. This *himsā*, violence, is to preclude the *himsā*, violence, by them and is motivated to save lives. The motivation there is not *ātmasukhecchā*, self-pleasure, it is preservation of human lives, the lives of the innocuous beings like cows, goats and the like. When a king goes out on a hunting spree it is different. He is shooting animals, wild or otherwise, just out of fun. It is a game for him, the game of hunting, like any other game that one plays for he likes to play it for its sheer value of diversion.

Just as killing of wild animals is permissible; that is obviously the implication of Manu; in the same way it is permissible in the case of a murderer, a terrorist, an *ātatāyin*, a cruel desperado who has no respect for life. When spotted, he is just to be killed without a second thought : *ātatāyinam āyāntam hanyād evāvicārayan*²², be he one's own teacher, or a child or an old man or a Brahmin: *guruṁ vā bālavṛddhau vā Brāhmaṇam vā*. There is no sin in killing him: *nātātāyivadhe doṣo hantur bhavati kaścana*.²³ Thus says the sage Vṛddhahāriita. The same sage had earlier given the ruling that one should not kill any being: *na himsyāt sarvabhūtāni*.²⁴ But the ruling has to change with different beings and different circumstances. The *himsā* of an *ātatāyin* is to prevent *himsā* and is, therefore, permissible.

Equally permissible is *himsā* in the course of Vedic sacrifices and there too to the extent enjoined by the scriptures. There is a well-known saying: *Vaidikī himsā himsā na bhavati*, the *himsā*, the killing (of animals) in the course of the Vedic ritual is no *himsā*, violence. That is to be taken as *ahimsā*, says Manu. For, it is from the Vedas that *dharma* flows. He fortifies his statement with the words that it is for the sake of sacrifices that animals were created by the Creator Himself: *yajñārthm paśavaḥ*

ṣṛṣṭāḥ svayam eva svayambhuvā.²⁵ In this Vṛddha Gautama strikes a different note, Says he: *ahimsā vaidikam karma*,²⁶ *ahimsā* is sanctioned by the Vedas. *Himsā* in the Vedic ritual is taken to be *ahimsā* itself. In the course of the Vedic ritual the animal was first besprinkled with holy water, *prokṣita*, as per the prescribed ritual—there is a reference to it in the *Mahābhārata* a number of times in its Anuśāsanaparvan where the topic of *ahimsā* and the abstinence from meat is given an extensive treatment. Next it was tied to post, called *yūpa*, before it was slaughtered. The larger the number of Aśvamedhas, the horse-sacrifices or Gomedhas, the cow-sacrifices, performed by kings, the greater was their glory. Kālidāsa mentions the Sarayū, the river flowing by the capital city of Ayodhyā, lined by hundreds of *yūpas*, *tīranikhātayūpā*,²⁷ *yūpas* dug on the banks by his ancestors who had performed a chain of sacrifices. Also he refers to King Rantideva who had sacrificed so many cows as to make a river of blood flow out: *srotomūrtyā bhuvī pariṇatām rantidevasya kīrtim*.²⁸

Though considered sinful in general the killing of beings is taken to be particularly heinous in the case of those of them as are considered sacred. Brāhmaṇas and cows are not to be killed, declares Manu: *na hanyād brāhmaṇān gāś ca*.²⁹ The Brāhmaṇas occupying a higher position in society, any violence against them invited the highest condemnation.

There are certain situations in life when it becomes very difficult to distinguish between *himsā* and *ahimsā*. Mahatma Gandhi saw in Gujarat a cow on the roadside writhing in pain. He could not bear its sight. He administered poison to it so that it could be relieved of pain and die in peace. For this act of his which could be called mercy killing he was criticized severely by the so-called protagonists of *ahimsā*, non-violence. The Mahatma's reply to those critics was that he had not committed *himsā*, violence. He did not mean to kill the cow. He was only aiming at relieving the pain and the misery of the animal. The longer it was to be in the condition in which it was, the longer

would have been its pain and agony. His act, therefore, was an act of *ahimsā*.

The writer of these lines would like to recount his own experience here which could well be the experience of anybody that would bring out the demarcating line between *himsā* and *ahimsā*. The incident happened when he was on an assignment at Leuven, Belgium. While walking towards the Institute where he was working, he noticed a fledgling crawling on a side-walk. He also noticed simultaneously a cat aiming at it. Out of pity for the fledgling he warded off the cat with the umbrella he was carrying and stayed on at the site till the little bird had gone into the nearby bushes. Continuing his walk towards the Institute he got into a thoughtful mood and began feeling somewhat uneasy, the earlier relief of his having saved a life leaving him with the thought as to what he had done was right or wrong, whether he had committed *himsā* or *ahimsā* by depriving an animal of its food that nature had earmarked for it. Maybe, the cat was hungry. He was responsible by keeping it away from its prey for augmenting its torture of hunger which is nothing but *himsā*, violence. His mind was heavier with each wave of successive thought. Such are the moments when violence melts into non-violence and vice versa.

For proper appreciation of *ahimsā* it is necessary to have a fuller grasp of the nature of *himsā* for, *ahimsā* is, as pointed out earlier, the negation of it. *Himsā* has three levels: (i) *saṁrambha*, (ii) *saṁārambha*, (iii) *ārambha*. All our activities and movements have their origin in mind. It is the resolve, therefore, that is at the back of all that a person does. It is this resolve that prepares the ground for *himsā*. It is the impulse to commit *himsā* that ultimately leads to it. The violent thoughts, the impulse, is the first stage and is called *saṁrambha*. To arrange for the means to commit *himsā* such as sword, knife, pistol, gun or for that matter any thing that may cause hurt; it could even be paperweight; is *saṁārambha*. The culmination of both of these, the *saṁrambha* and *saṁārambha*, is *ārambha* which denotes the actual act from start to finish.

Now, the question is: Why should there arise the idea of *himsā* in the mind. This could be due to malefic thoughts flowing out of the following four: *krodha*, anger; *māna*, pride; arrogance; *māyā*, illusion and *lobha*, greed called *Kaṣāyas* in Jain thought. Each one of these leading to three levels as enumerated above, the *himsā* would be of twelve kinds.

Since *himsā* is committed, as pointed out earlier, through mind (=thought), word and deed, *manovākkāya*, every one of the three kinds mentioned above will bring the types of *himsā* to the figure of 36 ($12 \times 3 = 36$).

Himsā with each one of these; thought word and deed; has three modes:

to indulge in it oneself, to have some one else commit it and to detect it. The earlier 36 multiplied with these three go up to the figure of 108. In this way *himsā* turns out to be of 108 types. *It is not, therefore, without significance that a rosary has 108 beads. It symbolizes the abstention from 108 types of himsā.*

Carrying on discussion on *ahimsā* further it may not be out of place to mention that *ahimsā* in the course of an activity does not mean not to kill or hurt or punch or torture or maim only; it also includes in its ambit such actions as puncturing one's self-esteem or disturbing one's peace of mind or one's will or intruding in one's privacy much against one's will or forcing one to do something for which one may have aversion. When parents in their wish for self-aggrandizement want their children to appear in administrative service examinations while they have flair for such disciplines as fine arts or architecture or town planning or theatre, or languages or social science, they are committing violence against them. Their insistence on their children to do what they want them to in which they have little or no interest and in which obviously they would not be able to perform well, they subject them to violence, not the physical violence here, but to psychological violence, the violence the scars of which they may have to carry for long, perhaps for all

their life for, that would lower their self-esteem, instilling in their mind their non-existent incapacity to do well and robbing them of the joy of creativity had they been allowed to pursue a vocation of their liking. The newspapers carry many a report of young boys and girls committing suicide in not having been able to do well in examinations in fear of angry outbursts of their guardians or the jeer of their peers. Similarly, when a political personality goes up a rostrum and begins inflicting on an increasingly bored audience his long-winded barrage of phony words, it is violence. When a gathering at a marriage party is served dinner at almost the dead of the night while the invitation mentions 8.00 P.M. as the time for it, it is violence. A guest descending on a host at odd hours without prior notice expecting all courtesies is certainly committing violence. To ignore a person, to sideline him deliberately, to gesticulate offensively, and to indulge in such other unseemly behaviour is also violence.

What has been said above is only the tip of the iceberg. Violence has endless forms and manifestations. It includes in its ever-stretching purview attitudinal and behavioural hurt, that is basic to all violence and is perhaps much more lethal than any other type of violence.

It is common experience that it is impossible to totally avoid *himśā* in life. One does kill in day to day life involuntarily and unknowingly scores and hundreds of beings, insects and germs. A number of them get crushed under the feet when one walks on the road. A number of them get killed when one inhales breath or exhales it. A number of them get killed when one washes vegetables and fruits. One does not mean to kill them. Still—such is the order of nature—they come to naught with any activity that one undertakes. In order to provide basic facilities to oneself and one's family and dependents like food, clothing and shelter some amount of *himśā* is involved. As the circle of activities connected with these multiplies, multiplies *himśā*. One has to dig the earth for building a house. One has to cook to arrange for meals. One has to clean the premises for hygienic

living. In all these activities a lot of beings, insects and germs—they are so small at times that their existence has only to be inferred as says the *Mahābhārata*, *sūkṣmayonīni bhūtāni tarkagamyāni kānicit*, even the batting of an eye-lid could destroy them—are likely to lose their lives. That just cannot be helped. But one has to see that one does not commit *himsā* for the sake of it, either himself or through some one else. This is what may be termed as *saṅkalpī himsā*, the *himsā* occasioned by *saṅkalpa*, intention. There has to be one caveat here. Even this *himsā* will have to be condoned if the motivation is to save an innocent life or the honour of the motherland if it is under attack by ruthless adversary. It was precisely for this reason that emperor Kharavela, a devout Jain, waged a war against the foreign invader Demetrius and pushed him back as far as to Sind. The war did involve *himsā*. Termed as *virodhī himsā* in texts, it was inevitable and did not invite condemnation or censure.

The protagonists of *ahimsā* go so far as to advocate abjuring the feeling of hatred or revenge against an adversary who has done somebody wrong. To resist and repulse him is all right but to hate him, to nurture a feeling of aversion for him or to settle scores with him is not. Mahatma Gandhi led the movement to oust the British from his country to free it from their clutches but never advocated hating them. He ended the British rule without ending the friendship with and love for the British. That is true *ahimsā*. It is this which not unoften results in change of heart even of the most cruel of the cruel and is the ideal that needs to be pursued in all seriousness.

Ahimsā is the first among the five universal rules, *yamas* which the *Yogadarśana* proclaims as transcending race, space and time: *jātidēśakālasamayānavacchinnāḥ*.³⁰ It again forms the first among the constituents of the *daivī sampad*,³¹ the divine property, enunciated in the *Bhagavadgītā*. With *ahimsā* setting itself firmly, declares the *Yogasūtra*, hostility vanishes: *ahimsāpratiṣṭhāyām...vairatyāgaḥ*.³² With it there is no enmity

of any kind for all times. *Ahiṃsā sarvathā sarvadā sarvabhūtānām anabhidrohaḥ*.³³ With the hostility gone, there flows forth love with the *ahiṃsaka* beginning to look at all beings and objects with a friendly and loving eye.³⁴

References

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7. Ibid.
8. *mā no dvikṣata kaścana*. *Ṛgveda*, 12.1.18.
9. *mā no martā abhidruhan*, *ibid.*, 1.5.10.
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12. *Yogasūtra of Vijñānabhikṣu*, 2.30.
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29. *Manusmṛti*, 4.162
30. 2.30
31. *Bhagavadgītā*, XVI.2

32. *Yogasūtra*, 2.3.5
33. *Vyāsabhāṣya* under *Yogasūtra* 2.30.
34. *Mitrasya mā cakṣuṣā sarvāṇi bhūtāni samīkṣantām, Vājasaneyisaṃhitā*, 36.18

Satya

Truth

Indian tradition has laid emphasis on *satya* or truth since times immemorial. Preparatory to his pupil returning to his home to take up the duties of a householder on completion of his period of Vedic education, his teacher gave him parting advice. We have a specimen of it in the *Taittirīyopaniṣad*. This is the first available indication of what can be described in modern terminology as the Convocation Address. The very first piece of advice that the teacher gives his pupil is that he should speak the truth: *satyam vada*.¹ Enumerating the things that he should not neglect while continuing with his advice, he mentions truth: *satyān na pramaditavyam*,² let there be no neglect of truth. The Upaniṣadic seers know it fully well that it is very difficult to keep to truth. The glitter of gold is far too distracting to turn a person away from it: *hiraṇmayena pātreṇa satyasyāpihitam mukham*,³ the face of truth is covered with a golden disc.⁴ They implore the Lord to unveil it for them so that they, who love truth, may see it: *tan me pūṣann apāvṛṇu satyadharmāya dr̥ṣṭaye*.⁵

The *Vājasaneyi Saṁhitā* declares that it is truth alone that triumphs, *satyam eva jayati*⁶ and that it is through *satya* that the path that leads to divinity opens up: *satyena panthā vitato devāyānaḥ*.⁷

The *Yājñavalkyasmṛiti*⁸ includes *satya* among the ten *yamas* or great moral and religious observances the constant practice of

which is a must, as says Manu: *yamān seveta satatam*.⁹

A stanza in the *Rāmāyaṇa* assigns to *satya* or truth a place higher than even a thousand *Aśvamedhas*, horse sacrifices:

*aśvamedhasaharam ca satyaṁ ca tulayā dhṛtam |
aśvamedhasahasrād dhi satyam eva viśiṣyate*||¹⁰

"If a thousand *Aśvamedhas* and *satya*, truth were to be put in the scale, *satya* would weigh heavier than the thousand *Aśvamedhas*". *Aśvamedha* is that sacrifice which is described in the scriptures as the king of sacrifices, *kraturāṭ* and the remover of all sins: *sarvapāpapaṇodanaḥ*. If this is the situation with one *Aśvamedha*, how much more would it be with a thousand of them? Truth is said to transcend even the thousand.

It is not surprising that the stanza should occur in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. The work is a saga of the upholding of truth. Daśaratha had promised two boons to Kaikeyī who had asked for them at the crucial moment when he had already announced the coronation of Rāma. The boons asked were the coronation of Bharata in place of Rāma and the exile of the latter to a forest for fourteen years. Though he had promised the boons, Daśaratha did not have the heart to grant them when asked for, when face to face with Rāma. He did not say anything, *anukto 'py atrabhavatā*;¹¹ he just kept mum. It was Kaikeyī who conveyed to him everything. It did not take long for Rāma to get into the intricacy of the situation. He decided without even a second thought to save the truth for his father; that was what Kaikeyī also had told him, *satyena mahatā Rāma tārayasva nareśvaram*,¹² and volunteered to relinquish the throne and repair to forest. His father had not told him to do anything of the kind. There was no question of any disobedience to him, therefore. As a matter of fact, he had resisted all the pleading and persuasion of Lakṣmaṇa and Kausalyā; the latter even going to the extent of saying that her position as mother was superior to that of the father and that she orders him not to do anything of the kind that Kaikeyī wants him to. Rāma knew that his father had promised

two boons and that he had to keep his promise. Otherwise he would be untruthful. He did not want that stigma to attach to him. He had to uphold the truth, he being described to Nārada by Vālmīki as another Dharmarāja as far as truth was concerned.

There is no better *tapas*, austerity, than *satya*, truth, *nāsti satyāt param tapah*,¹³ says Cāṇakya. It is easy to preach but extremely difficult to practise it. Even Yudhiṣṭhira who had earned the exalted title of Dharmarāja on account of his adherence to truth and righteousness faltered once in its practice by permitting himself the equivocal statement *Aśvatthāmā hato naro vā kuñjaro vā*, Aśvatthāman; it could be a man or an elephant; is killed, that had made his chariot touch the earth which had been otherwise five finger-lengths above it.

Truth is not only elusive but also superhuman while lying is not. Mahatma Gandhi who put in consistent efforts to tell the truth must have found it the most difficult of his missions. He escaped the dilemma by 'experimenting' with truth rather than propagating it or relying on it. Truth is a moral concept which has to be taught or imposed but lie is spontaneous. One may have a machine to detect lies, a lie detector, but not a machine to detect truth, a truth detector.

It is because of the extreme difficulty of keeping truth and lie away from each other that the old preceptors and teachers accommodate the role of lies in human life. They sanction in worldly affairs the use of truth paired with untruth: *satyānṛtaśabdau mithunīkṛtya naisargiko 'yaṁ lokavyavahārah*.¹⁴

Śukra, the guru of King Bali warns the latter to be wary of Vāmana (Viṣṇu's fourth incarnation in the dwarf form) and advises him to hide himself and say that he is not available when he approaches him. The noble king who would not tell a lie, says 'no' to it prompting Guru Śukrācārya to say

*na narmayuktaṁ vacanaṁ hinasti
na strīṣu rājan na vivāhakāle
prāṇātyaye sarvadhanāpahāre*

pañcānṛtāny āhur apātakāni!!¹⁵

“(Untrue) words said in joke cause no harm, nor do they do so in affairs with women, in the performance of marriage, in times of danger to one’s life and (at the possibility) of the loss of entire wealth. Five (types of) lies are said not to lead to sin.”

In spite of all this the scriptures enjoin adherence to truth, that being the ideal. Truth is the second of the distinctive marks, *lakṣaṇas*, according to Manu of *dharma*: *ahimsā satyam asteyam.....daśakam dharmalakṣaṇam*.¹⁶ Aśoka also includes it among the *lakṣaṇas* of *dharma* in his Delhi Topra Pillar Edict II in answer to his poser: *kiyaṁ cu dhammeti*, what is *dhamma*? His answer is: *Dhamma* or *Dharma* is *bahukayāne dayā dāne sace socaye sādhave mādave, apāsnavah bahukalyāṇam dayā dānam satyam śaucam sādhitā mādavam*; compassion, charity, truth, purity, goodness and gentleness.

Indian tradition furnishes in its long history an instance of adherence to truth which has few parallels. The reference is here to King Hariścandra who passed all the severe tests the sage Viśvāmitra had put him to check whether he keeps to his word or not. The king had to forego his kingdom to sell off his wife and son and even his ownself but did not allow himself to swerve from his plighted word. It is because of that he earned for himself the sobriquet of *satyavādīn*, *Satyavādī Hariścandra*.

Indian tradition assigns the most exalted position to *satya* in that it equates it with the most sacred of the texts, the Vedas which are imperishable: *satyam evākṣayā vedāḥ*¹⁷ as also with Brahman, *satyam ekapadam brahma*. In one word *satya* is Brahman itself, says the *Rāmāyaṇa*.¹⁸ On realizing it, the seer proclaims: *idam aham anṛtāt satyam upaimi*,¹⁹ here I go from untruth to truth. All the ephemeral existence is unreal; what is real or true is the ever-present, all-knowing, self-existent Supreme, the Highest Truth, *satyam param*, which transcends all illusion, *nirastakuhakam*, which we all worship, *dhīmahi*.²⁰ It is this truth which is universal. It was true in the past, it is true

in the present and it will be true in the future, *woh sī bhī sach, woh hai bhī sach, woh hosī bhī sach*, as says Nanak. In the ultimate analysis truth and God are one and indivisible. Truth is God and God is truth.

Just as emperor Aśoka put forward the poser: what is *Dharma*, after emphasizig time and again its practice, in the same way many thinkers and intellectuals of old place before themselves the poser as to what *satya* or truth is. The *Kenopaniṣad* has sought to answer this by saying that non-deception, the non-distortion of speech, mind and body is *satya*: *satyam iti amāyitā, akauṭilyam vānmanahkāyānām*.²¹ In simple words *amāyitā* means straightforwardness, the absence of artificiality, which goes with all the three, the speech, the mind and the body. The artificiality in speech goes with the use of words in a way as to yield a meaning different from the one intended. It is not unoften that one listens to words capable of yielding more than one meaning. That is perceived as an art, which lies in giving a different interpretation to one's words or misinterpreting them by giving them a turn and twist. While actually having said something one may come clean in not having said that. This is what diplomacy is. Since speech is a means of expressing thoughts which have their origin in mind, the turn and the twist in speech are only a manifestation of the same in mind. The body will act as per the direction of the mind. If each one of the three, the speech, the mind and the body are *amāyins*, undistorted, what will come out of them will be nothing but *amāyitā*, non-distortion,.....or as-it-is-ness or *yāthārthya* or truth.

The *Prastāvatarīṅgiṇī* refers to an old statement according to which *satya* is that phenomenon where speech, and mind say one and the same thing: *yathārthe vānmanase satyam*.²² It is our common experience that we very often do not speak out what is in our mind or speak out just the reverse of it. That speech of ours is not true. When a person presses the doorbell about the midnight when we are getting ready to go to bed or are already in it enjoying sound sleep, we curse the fellow who disturbed us.

We open the door fretting and fuming but finding a close friend or an acquaintance of long standing, we wreath our face with a broad smile and don an appearance of extreme happiness in his affording us an opportunity to welcome him. This certainly is no *satya*. Our mind and speech are not at the same wavelength at this time. Whenever they would be so, it would be *satya*.

That we are not always true is the reason that we have started qualifying or quantifying truth. We very often use such expressions as 'it is very true, it is absolutely true, it is nothing but true.' Our expressions like 'it is not far from truth, it is simple truth, it is not totally devoid of truth; it is the whole truth,' etc. betray our dilemma in keeping truth away from untruth, a dilemma which has plagued mankind since times immemorial.

According to the *Līṅgapurāṇa* the description of anything exactly in the same form in which it is seen, heard, inferred or experienced is *satya*, truth, provided it does not cause hurt to beings:

*dr̥ṣṭam śrutam cānumitam svānubhūtam yathārthataḥ |
kathanam satyam ity uktam prāṇipīḍāvivarjitam ||* ²³

The expression *prāṇipīḍāvivarjitam*, bereft of hurt to beings in the context of truth, as quoted above, leads us to an aspect of truth which has received careful attention in Indian tradition. It does not accept mere factual statement as truth but only that statement which does not cause harm or injury to others. If an untruth could save an innocent life, it would be truth. The *Padmapurāṇa* says that the untruth that saves the life of people is truth and the truth that does not do so, is untruth.:

*uktvā 'nṛtaṁ bhaved yatra prāṇināṁ prāṇarakṣaṇam |
anṛtaṁ tatra satyaṁ syāt satyam apy anṛtaṁ bhavet ||* ²⁴

The same idea is echoed in the *Yogasūtra*²⁵ and the *Lāṭasamhitā*.

The question now is:

Should one persist with it still? Is one to tell a dacoit or a murderer the place of hiding of an innocent person so that he could rob or kill him? Will that be truth? It is at this point that the ancient thinkers paused and after going into every aspect of truth in all their thoroughness found no hesitation in declaring that there is no harm in resorting to untruth in such cases. A work like the *Mahābhārata* clears the air about the practical aspect of truth. In ringing words it declares that where truth is not to be spoken and the untruth needs to be spoken, untruth becomes truth and truth becomes untruth:

*bhavel satyam avaktavyam vaktavyam anṛtaṁ bhavel
tatrānṛtaṁ bhavel satyam satyam cāpy anṛtaṁ bhavel* || 26

While it is important to speak the truth, be correct about everything, it is equally important that truth should cause no harm to others:

*yad vidyamānārthaviṣayam prāṇipīḍākaraṇam tat satyam
apy asatyam*²⁷

More than one ancient Sanskrit text extols truth assigning it the highest place among the virtuous deeds. The *Brahmavaivartapurāṇa* enumerates such deeds in the ascending order of importance, closing the enumeration with *satya*. It proclaims it as the highest form of *dharma*: *nāsti satyāt paro dharmah*.²⁸ To build an oblong tank, *vāpī*, says it, is better than (digging) a hundred wells, a sacrifice is better than a hundred wells, a son is better than a sacrifice and truth is better than a sacrifice. In words more forceful than the above it proclaims at yet another place that one earns more merit by gifting an oblong tank, *vāpī*, than a hundred wells, still more merit by giving a girl in marriage than by gifting ten such tanks, still more merit by performing a sacrifice than by giving ten girls in marriage, still more merit by speaking truth than by performing a hundred sacrifices. The whole world stands on truth, says it; it being the basis of everything. It is with it that the wind blows and the sun

shines. Everything depends upon it. It is supreme. One who is united with it turns into divinity.

Satya or truth has been accepted as the cardinal principle even for State Policy in India. It occupies the first place among the great qualities of a king: *satyaṃ śauryaṃ dayā tyāgo nṛpasyaite mahāguṇāḥ*,²⁹ truth, valour, compassion and charity are the great qualities of a king without which he becomes an object of disparagement.

If an alliance is to be forged, it should be with a truthful king.

Kālidāsa makes a very interesting remark in the context of the enumeration of the qualities of the kings of the Raghu race. For keeping to truth, they would exercise economy in words, *satyāya mitabhāṣiṇām*,³⁰ says he. This is indicative of the deep insight of the ancients into human psychology. Too many words have greater potential of straying away from truth. The boasts and the bombasts would render it difficult for a man to keep to the narrow path of truth. Manu rightly ordains that one should first put one's words in the sieve of truth and then speak: *satyapūtām vaded vācam*.³¹

Reference

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6. *Muṇḍakopaniṣad*, 3.1.6
7. Ibid.
8. *Yājñavalkyasmṛti*, 3.5.312
9. 4.204.
10. *Rāmāyaṇa*, II 19.2
11. Ibid., II.19.23
12. Ibid., II, 18. 40
13. *Cāṇakyaśūtrāṇi*, 417.
14. *Śārīrakamīmāṃsābhāṣya*, 1.1.1.160

15. *Mahābhārata*, I. 82.16
16. *Manusmṛti*, 6.92.
17. *Rāmāyaṇa*, II.14.7
18. Ibid.
19. *Yajurveda*, 1.5
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21. *Kenopaniṣad*, 4.8
22. *Prastāvataranṅiṇī*, p.40
23. *Līṅgapurāṇa*, 8.13
24. *Padmapurāṇa*, 5.15.392
25. 1.21
26. *Mahābhārata*, Karṇaparvan, 69.32
27. *Cāritrasāraṅīkā*, 2.
28. *Brahmavaivartapurāṇa*, Janmakhaṇḍa, Adhyāya 95 (Ref.from
Śābdakalpadruma)
29. *Hitopadeśa*, 3.31.
30. *Raghuvamśa*, 1.7
31. *Manusmṛti*, 6.46.

Dharma

At the time of completion of education a student was given parting instruction by his teacher where he was asked to follow *dharma*, *dharmam cara*¹ and never to neglect it, *dharmān na pramāditavyam*².

Dharma has received utmost attention and fulsome praise in India from sages and seers, thinkers and philosophers, writers and critics. If protected, it protects; if killed, it kills: *dharmā eva hato hanti dharmo rakṣati rakṣitaḥ*³.

Etymologically *dharma* means that which sustains, *dhāraṇād dharma ity āhuḥ*, *dharma* is what holds people together, *dharmo dhārayate prajāḥ*⁴. *Dharma* is made up of two components √*dhṛ* 'to sustain' and the suffix *man*, the active agent, the one, which sustains. It is a set of rules, conventions and customs, which lay down norms for individual and social conduct and behaviour and which are sanctified by tradition. They form the bedrock of social order. Without these the society turning into a medley of unruly individuals would just disintegrate. Man not observing them would do anything but revert to his original status of animal, *dharmeṇa hīnāḥ paśubhiḥ samānāḥ*⁵.

Efforts were on since the early past to define this rather elusive term. Manu, the earliest law-giver has recorded its ten characteristics which are contentment, forgiveness, self-control, abstention from unrighteously appropriating anything, (obedience to the rules of) purification, coercion of the organs, wisdom, knowledge of the (supreme soul), truthfulness and abstention from anger:

*dhṛtiḥ kṣamā damo śteyaṁ śaucam indriyanigrahaḥ
dhīr vidyā satyam akrodho daśakam dharmalakṣaṇam*⁶

The *Hitopadeśa* reduces the list to eight:

*ijyādhyayanadānāni tapaḥ satyam dhṛtiḥ kṣamā
alobha iti mārgo 'yam dharmasyāṣṭavidhaḥ smṛtaḥ*⁷

Sacrifice, study (of the scriptures), charity, penance, truth, fortitude, forgiveness and absence of greed is the eightfold path of *dharma*.

The *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* reduces the number by one; it records seven characteristics of *dharma*:

*ahimsā satyam asteyam akāmakrodhalobhatā
bhūtapriyahitehā ca dharmo 'yam sārva-varṇikaḥ*⁸

Non-violence, truth, non-stealing, absence of passion, anger and greed and the desire to do what is good or agreeable to beings is *dharma* for all the castes.

The figure of seven is reduced to five from his list of ten by Manu. These five characteristics are "abstention from injuring (creatures), truthfulness, abstention from unlawfully appropriating (the goods of others), purity and control of the organs":

*ahimsā satyam asteyam śaucam indriyanigrahaḥ
etaṁ sāmāsikam dharmam cātvarṇye 'bravīn Manuḥ*⁹

Bringing down the number four from five he says that the Veda, the sacred tradition, the customs of the virtuous men and what is dear to one's own self constitute *dharma*:

*vedaḥ smṛtiḥ sadācāraḥ svasya ca priyam ātmanaḥ
etac caturvidham prāhuḥ sāksād dharmasya lakṣaṇam*¹⁰

The *Mahābhārata* picking up the common denominator of all these declares only one to be the distinguishing feature of it which it describes as its essence, *dharmasarvasva* which is that one should not do to others that which one would not like to encounter oneself: *ātmanaḥ pratikūlāni pareṣāṁ na samācaret*.

It also explains it as just *ānṛśamsya*¹¹, compassion which it calls the best of the virtues, *paro dharmah* or *ārjava*, straightforwardness, *ārjavam dharmam ity āhuh*¹².

The approach for succinctness in defining *dharmā* seems to have gained in appeal which is in evidence in Kaṇāda's explanation of it as *yato 'bhyudayaniḥśreyasasiddhiḥ sa dharmah*¹³, that which leads to rise (material prosperity) and final beatitude is *dharmā* and that of Jaimini *codanālakṣaṇo 'rtho dharmah*, scriptural injunction is *dharmā*

Emperor Aśoka defines *dharmā*, he calls it *dhamma*, the Pali form of it, as compassion, charity, truthfulness, purity, goodness, gentleness; *dayā, dāne, sace, socave, mādave, sādhave*¹⁴. This is in essentials the same as enunciated by Manu. *Dharma*, therefore, signifies, according to Manu and Aśoka, a set of ethical principles termed rightly as the common property of all religions.

A word capable of many shades of meaning, *dharmā* also signifies rule or practice. When it is said *kṛte ca pratikurvīta eṣa dharmah sanātanaḥ*¹⁵, one should return the good deed done, it precisely has the same meaning; *eṣa dharmah sanātanaḥ* means 'it is the age-old rule'.

Very often the term signifies duty. Manu states the *dharmas*, duties, in Kṛtayuga are different from those in Tretā. The same is the case with Dvāpara and Kali. When the *Bhagavadgītā* says *svadharme nidhanam śreyah paradharmo bhayāvahah*¹⁶, it is better to lose one's life while doing one's duty going with one's station in life than to take on the duty prescribed for a different station, it has that very meaning. Kālidāsa too uses the word in that very meaning when he says *ṣaṣṭhāmsavṛtter api dharmā eṣaḥ*¹⁷, it is the duty of one who draws one sixth of the income of the subjects as the State revenue.

As one of the four ends of life, the *caturvarga*, it means righteousness, good deeds. It is this, which is said to be the only friend who follows a person even in death: *eka eva suhr̥d dharmo nidhane 'py anuyāti yaḥ*¹⁸.

There could be occasions when duties may conflict with each other. One may have to choose between two duties and prioritize one over the other. To falter in such situations is not uncommon. Kālidāsa describes in the very beginning of his *Raghuvamśa* a situation which even a king of the calibre of Dilipa could not handle properly. Well, it is the duty, the sacred obligation, of a husband to satisfy his wife sexually after the period of menstruation. The king with his mind intent on this was in a hurry not to violate this obligation. This led to his not showing due respect to the divine cow Surabhi by not circumambulating her on the way back to the earth after having waited upon Indra, thus incurring her curse of not being blessed with progeny till such time as he were to propitiate her daughter. Now, here was a situation where Dilipa had two duties, one towards his wife and the other towards the celestial cow. While it was *dharma* to be united with the wife, it was also *dharma*, *sādhvācaraṇa*, to be respectful to the divine cow. Caught in this cleft stick he should have exercised his judgement. Showing respect to divine beings, *devayoni*, is more important than hurrying to meet the *manuṣyayoni*, even if that would have implied transgression of duty, *dharmalopa*, temporarily.

In the *Mahābhārata* a situation arose when Yudhiṣṭhira in the game of dice put on stake even his wife Draupadī and lost her after having lost himself first. Draupadī put the question pointedly to the charioteer Pratikāmin deputed to bring her to the Court as to whether a person who had staked himself and lost has the authority over another person to stake him/her. With Pratikāmin reporting back to the Court what Draupadī had told him and Yudhiṣṭhira keeping silent, Duryodhana felt that it would be better if she were to put this question to the Court in person herself. Even though in periods and in one garment to cover her shame, she accompanied Pratikāmin deputed again to bring her and stood in front of the father-in-law Dhṛtarāṣṭra. It was from there that she was dragged by Duṣśāsana under the orders of Duryodhana to the Court where none of those present

including Bhīṣma, Vidura, Droṇa, Kṛpa and the other dignitaries gave any answer. At that point of time rose Vikarṇa, one of the younger brothers of Duryodhana to defend Draupadī. The thrust of his argument was that since Draupadī belonged to all the Pāṇḍava brothers, just one among them had no authority to stake her. This met with rebuttal from Karṇa on the ground that since the other Pāṇḍavas had been staked and had been lost, they had forfeited their right over Draupadī. Moreover, Yudhiṣṭhira had staked all his possessions, which included Draupadī. So the question as to whether he had the authority to stake her had become redundant. Even being dragged and insulted by Duḥśāsana Draupadī repeated her question and wanted an answer for it. It is here that Bhīṣma came forward with the remark that the way of *dharma* was inscrutable, defying even the intelligence of great thinkers. He expressed his helplessness in answering the question effectively and directed her instead to Yudhiṣṭhira. The story goes on reinforcing the view that there could be situations when it could be difficult to interpret *dharma*.

Dharma also is taken to signify right conduct, the conduct that conforms to accepted social norms which could include giving way first to Brahmins, cows and kings, not sleeping during the twilights and studying during them, thou-theeing the elders or addressing them by their name¹⁹. It also implies observing proper etiquette. It is this which makes old texts enjoin not scratching the head with joined palms²⁰ or urinating in the direction of the sun and the fire²¹ (they being taken as divinities) and urinating away from a habitation and throwing water with the feet's washings away from it²² and sleeping with the head in the northern and the western directions²³. The etiquette also includes not speaking when not asked²⁴.

It has been emphasized time and again that *dharma* is to be followed as a course of life with no mundane motive. One who tries to milk it or is assailed with doubt about it on having followed it does not get its fruit:

*na dharmaphalam āpnoti yo dharmam dogdhum icchatī
yaś cainam śaṅkate kṛtvā nāstikyāt pāpacetanaḥ॥*²⁵

Declares the *Mahābhārata*: *dharma* should not be doubted if it has not yielded the (desired result): *na phalābhāvād dharmāḥ śaṅkītavyaḥ*²⁶. *Phala* is not for what it is resorted to. Those who remain steadfast in it meet with no misfortune. Even if they were to be striving to realize a particular aim, they should begin first with *dharma* for the realization of the aim, the aim is concomitant to it as is the nectar to the heaven²⁷. What is important is that one should keep on doing good deeds. These by themselves would lead to the realization of the desired goal. There should be no reason to doubt the efficacy of *dharma*.

In the course of the discussion about *dharma* a point that needs special attention is that a *dharma* which comes in the way of another *dharma* is no *dharma*, it is a bad path, that which does not step on the other *dharma* is (real) *dharma*:

*dharmam yo bādhate dharmo na sa dharmāḥ kuvartma tatī
avirodhāt tu yo dharmāḥ sa dharmāḥ satyavikramaḥ॥*²⁸

The sage Lomaśa in the course of his conversation with Yudhiṣṭhira narrates the episode of King Śibi of Uśinara to whom a pigeon, in reality Agni in disguise, repaired for rescue from an eagle, in reality Indra in disguise, chasing it, the divinities out to test the devotion of the king to *dharma*. When the king even though pressed hard by the eagle did not let go the pigeon on the score that it was his duty, *dharma*, to offer protection to a being who had taken refuge with him, the eagle makes the point that to keep a being, meaning itself, without food, the food that nature has earmarked for it, would be *adharma*. Were that, the *śaraṇāgatarakṣaṇa*, protecting the one come for rescue to be treated as *dharma*, then it would be that kind of *dharma* which would come in the way of the other *dharma*, the *dharma* of not keeping a being tormented by hunger away from its food²⁹.

It is situations such as the above that make *dharma* almost intractable. Rightly has it been said that it is as difficult to divine *dharma* as is to divine the feet of a serpent: *aher iva hi dharmasya padam duḥkham gaveṣitum*³⁰. It is this which has prompted thinkers to proclaim that even truth which is designated as the highest form of *dharma* and the deviation from which as impermissible that “that is truth that leads to the well-being of others, all else is technical truth”, *na satyam kevalam satyam anṛtam na tathānṛtam, hitam yat sarvalokasya tadṛtam śeṣam anyathā*.³¹

“Truth is no truth in itself. Nor is untruth so. Whatever is good for all is truth. The rest is otherwise.”

Dharma cannot be understood by reading about it alone; *na dharmah paripāṭhena śakyo bhārata veditum*³². It has to be put into practice. It is this, which sustains society, *dhāraṇād dharmā ity āhur dharmo dhārayate prajāḥ*. Those who are not motivated for it are like shrivelled ones among grains and the white ants among the winged ones:

*pulākā iva dhānyeṣu putrikā iva pakṣiṣu
tadvidhās te manuṣyāṇām yeṣām dharmo na kāraṇam*³³

One needs to have no companion in *dharma*. Alone one may go with it: *eka eva cared dharmam, nāsti dharme sahāyātā*³⁴. So long is one's life, one should go on following *dharma*.

Dharma is broadly of two types, the *pravṛtilakṣaṇa* and the *nivṛtilakṣaṇa*³⁵, the do's and the don'ts, something which one should do and something which one should not. Among them again roles may change, the circumstances warranting their reversal. What is *adharma* may don the mantle of *dharma* in certain situations and at certain times. Even theft, lie and violence, which are condemned otherwise, could be resorted to as *dharma*, an act of piety, in certain situations like when one's life or the life of innocent persons is in danger. It is situations like these which lend legitimacy to the sages like Viśvāmitra eating dog's meat or messiahs of non-violence like Mahatma

Gandhi resorting to mercy killing of a cow to enable it to escape mortal pain or Yudhiṣṭhira telling Droṇa who was blasting his army that Aśvatthāman had died. This type of *dharma* which in normal circumstances would have been *adharma* inviting strong censure, the author of the *Mahābhārata* terms as *āvasthika*:

*ādānam anṛtaṁ hiṁsā dharmo hy āvasthikaḥ smṛtaḥ*³⁶

the term being explained by the commentator Nīlakaṇṭha as *avasthāviśeṣe bhavaḥ*, peculiar to a situation, *prāṇatyāgādau adharmasyāpi steyāder dharmatvāt*, when there is risk to life even a condemnable act, *adharma*, like theft and so on being *dharma*.

Further, *dharma* can be divided into duties or meritorious acts needed to be practised by all right-thinking people and the duties and activities peculiar to certain families, the *kuladharma*s, the family traditions which would put a spanner in the acts of those who may go astray. They exercise a great hold on the family, the clan, the tribe and the community whatever the differences among their members³⁷ and ensure strict adherence to certain time-honoured norms. Interestingly, it is this community living in Bali in Indonesia that came effectively in the way of the spread of Islam when it was sweeping the other islands of the archipelago. An odd man or two in it could not dare conversion, however inclined for it, for fear of excommunication from the community, rendering his/her life pretty hard.

The scriptures lay down emphatically that a person must go on following *dharma* in whatever station of life even when in dire straits. He has to be even in his dealings with all. For this outer symbols (like ochre robes or matted hair) do not matter:

*duḥkhito 'pi cared dharmam yatra kutrāśrame rataḥ |
samaḥ sarveṣu bhūteṣu na liṅgam dharmakāraṇam*³⁸

Dharma yields what one may not have even thought of, *asaṅkalpyam acintyaṅ ca phalaṁ dharmād avāpyate*. It is *dharma*, which affords protection in all situations. Kauśalyā

invokes this very *dharma* when she bids adieu to her son Rāma leaving for exile for fourteen years:

*yaṁ pālayasi dharmam tvam prītyā ca niyamena ca |
sa vai rāghavaśārdūla dharmas tvām abhirakṣatu ||*³⁹

“O ye the tiger among the descendants of the race of Raghu, may that *dharma* which thou had been following joyfully and regularly, protect thee.”

Reference

1. *Taittirīyopaniṣad*, 1.11.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Manusmṛti*, 8.15.
4. *Mbh.*(*Mahābhārata*), Karṇa. 69.58. Also see *Rāmāyaṇa: dhāraṇād dharmam ity āhur dharmeṇa vidhṛtāḥ prajāḥ*, Uttara, 59. 7-8.
5. *Hitopadeśa*, Kathāmukha, 25.
6. *Manusmṛti*, 6.9
7. *Hitopadeśa*, 1.8.
8. *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*, 11.17.21
9. *Manu*, 10.63.
10. *Ibid.*, 2.12.
11. *Mbh.*, Vana, 213.30.
12. *ibid.*, Anu, 142.30.
13. *Yogasūtra*, 4.100.
14. Delhi Topra Pillar Inscription No.7, line 12.
15. *Rāmāyaṇa*, 5.1.106.
16. 3.35.
17. *Abhijñānaśākuntala*, V.4.
18. *Hitopadeśa*, 1.66.
19. *Mbh.*, Śānti. 193.25.
20. *Ibid.*, Anu, 104.69.
21. *Ibid.*, 104.75.
22. *Ibid.*, 104.82.
23. *Ibid.*, Anu., 104.48.
24. *Ibid.*, Śānti., 287.35.
25. *Ibid.*, Vana., 31.6.
26. *Ibid.*, 31.38.

27. Ibid., *nahi dharmād apaity arthaḥ svargalokād ivāmṛtam*, Udyoga., 37.48.
28. Ibid., 131.11.
29. Ibid., Chapter 131.
30. Ibid., Śānti., 132.20.
31. *Bhāratamañjarī*, Śānti., 402.
32. *Mbh.*, Śānti., 260.3.
33. Ibid., 181.7.
34. Ibid., 193.32.
35. Ibid., 241.6.
36. Ibid., 36.11.
37. Ibid., Vana., 243.2.
38. *Hitopadeśa*, 1.91.
39. *Rāmāyaṇa*, 2.25.3.

Dāna

Charity

There has been great emphasis on the quality of *dāna*, charity, in Sanskrit literature. The spirit behind this must have been the desire to share one's wealth and resources with the needy and the deprived, these (the wealth and the resources being meant by nature for everybody) of one's own free volition. There is no compulsion of any sort for parting with a portion of one's possessions and sharing it with others except the inner urge of making merit which may not always be free from the taint of self-interest in that the philanthropist or the donor while offering something by way of charity may have the idea that it will promote his well-being and that of his kith and kin.

Charity is defined as:

*parānugrahabuddhyā svavittaparityāgo dānam*¹; and *anugrahārtham svasyātisargo dānam*², parting of his possession by a person to help others.

The ancient thinkers of India have taken precaution to guard against the possibility of the act of charity leading to the growth of a feeling of superiority among donors over the supplicants, the less privileged ones, which may have the seeds in it of arrogance and which could well erode the good impact of the good deed. This point is made tellingly in the *Taittirīyopaniṣad*³ in the address of the teacher to the pupil as he readies himself to go back home on completion of his education. The teacher says: *śraddhayā deyam, aśraddha 'deyam, śriyā deyam, hriyā*

deyam, bhiyā deyam, give respectfully, do not give disrespectfully, give in plenty, give in a spirit of humility, give with a feeling of fear.

This again is the thinking behind the categorization of charity. According to the *Bhagavadgītā* it is of three types, Sāttvika, Rājasa and Tāmasa. The Sāttvika is one which is given as a matter of duty in proper time and place to a worthy person who has done no good turn:

*dātavyam iti yad dānam dīyate 'nupakāriṇe
deśe kāle ca pātre ca tad dānam sāttvikam smṛtam*||⁴

The Rājasa is that which is given with the hope of return or reward or is given reluctantly:

*yat tu pratyupakārārtham phalam uddiśya vā punaḥ
dīyate ca parikliṣṭam tad rājasam iti smṛtam*||⁵

The Tāmasa is which is given at a wrong place and time or to an unworthy person without proper ceremony or with insult:

*adeśakāle yad dānam apātrebhyaś ca dīyate
asatkṛtya avajñātam tat tāmasam udāhṛtam*||⁶

Apart from the above, there is another type of categorization of charity which has for its basis the different kinds of motivations. The *Skandapurāṇa*⁷ has six types of them: *dharmadāna*, *arthadāna*, *kāmadāna*, *vṛṇādāna*, *harṣadāna* and *bhayadāna*. The *dharmadāna* is that which is given routinely to the deserving ones, as a matter of duty, *dharmabuddhyā*, with no altruistic motive: *anavekṣya prayojanam*, *arthadāna* is to extract money out of greed from a wealthy person through allurements, *kāmadāna* is giving gifts to undeserving persons to serve a particular purpose, *vṛṇādāna* is giving charity to retrieve one's honour just to honour the promise of charity made in an assembly earlier, *harṣadāna* is giving gift/gifts as an expression of one's joy on hearing or seeing pleasant things, *bhayadāna* is to go in for charitable acts to ward off censure, danger or

violence. At another place the same Purāṇa records another type of *dāna*, the *kāmyadāna*, the *dāna* given willingly, *icchāsamistham*, for begetting children, victory, prosperity, wife, son and so on.

The best of the charities is that which is given in all humility to a deserving person or to an institution with a feeling that it would do good to one's own self, the feeling of *ātmānugraha*, doing favour to one's own self, a point well-made in the *Svapnavāsavadatta* of Bhāsa where the Chamberlain announces the wish of the Magadha Princess Padmāvatī on a visit to the hermitage of the Queen Mother to offer gifts as a personal favour: *ātmānugraham icchatīha nṛpajā kasyādyā kim dīyatām*⁸.

Ancient texts expressly prohibit the boast of charity: *na dattvā parikīrtayet* for it tends to diminish fame: *kīrtir hrasati kīrtanāt*.

Of all the gifts it is the gift of knowledge which is the best:

sarvebhyo 'pi hi dānebhyo brahmadānaṃ viśiṣyate

And this gift has to be given with the least of the altruistic consideration. One who sells knowledge for eking out a living is a trader with his knowledge as the ware: *yasyāgamah kevalajīvikāyai taṃ jñānapaṇyaṃ vaṇijaṃ vadanti*. As per the *Agnipurāṇa* one who teaches the Vedas and music and dance qualifies himself for heaven. Now, the gift of knowledge may not be just in the form of teaching only, it could be in the form of presentation of a book too, the book that one has written:

*likhitvā pustakaṃ dattvā bhuktimuktim avāpnuyāt |
vedaśāstraṃ nṛtyagītaṃ yo 'dhyāpayati nākabhāk*⁹ ||

The presenter of a book gets enjoyment and heaven. It is not just that one should return favour, one should do so many times that over. The sun sucks water to return it thousand-fold: *sahasraguṇam utsraṣṭum ādatte hi rasam raviḥ*¹⁰. This is what Kālidāsa has said but much earlier, the Vedas had preached that

earn with hundred hands and distribute with thousand:

*śatahasta samāhara sahasrahasta saṅkirāḥ*¹¹

Charity has to be spontaneous, so spontaneous that a donor may have to have just the feel of the need of a supplicant without his even expressing it: *taṁ dhig astu kalayann api vāñchām arthivāgavasaram saḥate yaḥ*¹².

Faith in rebirth being ingrained in Indian psyche, it is believed that a supplicant of this birth, the one who begs, saying 'give me', 'give me', must have turned away the supplicants in earlier birth empty-handed saying 'I do not have', 'I do not have'. It is this retribution of refusal to give that has brought upon them the misery of begging before others:

*akṣaradvyaṁ abhyastaṁ nāsti nāstīti yat purāḥ
tad idaṁ dehi dehīti viparītaṁ upasthitaṁ*¹³

This should serve as warning to those who turn away the supplicants. It could well be that they themselves have to be supplicants in the next birth. This very consideration should lead them to the right track in not turning away the poor and the needy who approach them for help. To give in charity is not just a moral principle with the Indians, something which is good for society in relieving its misery, in bringing a cheer or two to the lowly and the miserable or just a principle for self-elevation, to raise oneself to higher levels of thought and conduct resulting in spiritual upliftment bringing in its train joy and bliss but also a principle of reaping what one has sown from which there is no escape. It is for this consideration alone, if not for any other, that one should not turn away supplicants.

If one has made a promise to give, one should fulfil it, no matter at what cost. There is no question of his going back on it, for, that would invite dire consequences. Declares the *Agnipurāṇa*: He who having promised to deities, teachers and parents does not give, has his hundred generations annihilated:

*kulānām tu śataṁ hanyād aprayacchan pratiśrutam |
devānām ca gurūṇām ca mātāpitros tathaiva ca ||*¹⁴

To give charity is no good in itself unless it were to go to the deserving one, the *pātra*, a point emphasized time and again in ancient texts: *pātrapratigatā vidyā pātrapratigatam dhanam*, knowledge to the deserving one and the money also to the same. Charity given to the undeserving one yields unwelcome result: *kupātreṣu tathā dattam dānam kuphaladam bhavel*¹⁵. —

Philanthropy is a virtue that goes with people who give away in charity to supplicants not only money but even the wife and the son keeping back nothing for themselves: *yācakebhyo dadāty artham bhāryām putrādikam tv api na saṅgrhṇāti ca yat kiñcid dānaśīlaḥ sa ucyate*¹⁶.

Indian tradition furnishes a number of instances of such philanthropists. Dadhīci, Bali. Karna and many others like them who have passed into legends for this quality of theirs. Remembered by countless millions over the centuries they have turned into proverbial figures. Knowing fully well and also reminded as in the case of Karna by his father, the sun, that he would be duped by Indra in the guise of a supplicant he does not hesitate to part with his armour and the ear-rings which were integral to his body. The removal of these entailed for him the virtual peeling off of his skin, a case of supreme sacrifice just to uphold his vow of not turning away a supplicant. The sacrifice was all the more poignant in that it made him in the absence of the natural shield vulnerable to the attack of the enemy which he could have warded off had he refused to part with what had been asked for from him. It was this spirit of not refusing a beggar that made these great people objects of perfidy. Had it not been so, Bali would not have been duped by Viṣṇu in the guise of a dwarf who asked to provide him only his three-feet-size of space. It is the acceptance of this request that landed the unsuspecting demon to the spectacle of the supplicant extending the size of each of his three steps to cover the entire

heaven, the mid-region and the earth and pushing him (the philanthropist) to the nether world. The celebrated sage Dadhīci offered his boneś to gods to enable their architect to fashion a thunderbolt with which Indra defeated Vṛtra and other demons. The sound of 'give' would never cease in the palace of Dilīpa (three types of sounds never stopped reverberating in his palace, the sound of the *mantras*, the twang of the bows and the sound of 'be given': *trayo ghoṣā na jīryanti dilīpasya niveśane mantraghoṣo dhanurghoṣo dīyatām iti vai trayah*).

There is a record in ritual texts of a sacrifice called Viśvajit wherein a king would part with all his possessions acquired by him in the course of the world conquest, the *digvijaya*, reducing himself in the process to utmost penury. Kālidāsa records in his *Raghuvamśa*¹⁷ the performance of this sacrifice by King Raghu after he had carried out the conquest of the quarters. Just when he had donated everything approached him a young graduand Kautsa to ask from him the high amount of fourteen crores that he had to pay his teacher by way of fee, the *dakṣiṇā*. The king with nothing left with him and still not willing to turn away the supplicant approaching him for the noble purpose of paying the *dakṣiṇā* to the teacher resolved to procure the requisite amount from Kubera, the god of wealth, by launching an invasion on him the following morning, the invasion which was not to take place, gold having rained in the treasury the night before. Kālidāsa also records the rare spectacle of the king insisting upon the entire haul of gold being gifted away to the graduand and the graduand agreeing to accept only the stipulated amount but relenting when told that the extra amount could help the upkeep of the Āśrama, the hermitage of his teacher.

With wealth there are three possibilities: one, it can be given in charity, two, it can be used in enjoyments and three, it can go waste. One who does not give, nor uses it up has it wasted away:

*dānam bhogo nāśas tisro gatayo bhavanti vittasya
yo na dadāti na bhunkte tasya tṛtīyā gatiḥ bhavati*¹⁸

Dāna, charity, has precedence, as seen from the above, over the other use of wealth, the self-use.

There is an age-old tradition in India of educational institutions being supported by private donations. The State had hardly to do anything with them. The Gurukulas, the Pāṭhaśālās, the Catuspāṭhis and the Tols thrived on charity, as do some of them even now. This was and still is also the case with the Āśramas. It was considered, as is considered even now, though on a much reduced scale, an act of piety to build rest houses, the Dharmaśālās for visitors, to provide free meals to the hungry, to set up kiosks for water for the thirsty and to give alms to the poor and the needy. The idea of making merit provided the necessary motivation to the rich and the affluent to take to these charitable activities.

In ancient India as early as the time of the Upaniṣads the sages felt the need of raising ample stocks of food, *annam bahu kurvīta, tad vratam*, says the *Taittirīyopaniṣad* (3.9). The same Upaniṣad goes on to say that there should be no refusal of food to anybody. Whoever comes to the house has got to be served sufficient food. This is a vow to be observed: *na kañcana vasatau pratyācakṣīta, tad vratam* (3.10).

A *mantra* of the *Ṛgveda* holds a person not willing to give food to others, gaining the same for no purpose. In truth it is his slaughter. He neither satisfies the deity, nor the friend. One who eats alone, eats sin alone:

*mogham annam vindate apracetā
satyam bravīmi vadha it sa tasya!
nāryamaṇam puṣyati no sakhāyam
kevalāgho bhavati kevalādātī*¹⁹

Not only this *mantra*, the entire hymn comprising nine *mantras* presents a picture of charity instructing the people as it does to share their food with others who have no food or have insufficient quantity of it. Says the *mantra* 10.117.1: "Hunger is death and one who eats but gives food to none moves quickly

towards death. One who gives food is saved from extinction and a person not giving food hardly finds anything or any one capable of giving him happiness." Another *mantra* in the same hymn decries the attitude of 'let others give'. "Remember", says it, "the two heads are not equally efficient in accomplishing a particular task, two cows do not yield the same amount of milk, the twins do not have the same valour and members of the same family are not equally charitable. So, if one has some food, one should give a share of it to others." Going on with the same theme, the hymn says, "one who does not give food to a person needing it or to a guest come to his house, does not find happiness. A person causing pain by his stiff attitude in not giving food to a suppliant and eats in his presence cannot be happy."

The food is not to be shared only with human beings, it has to be offered before one starts to partake of it even with birds, insects and animals. The tradition of taking out five morsels, the *pañcagrāsas*, from the food served for the purpose in orthodox Hindu households persists even today. This has as its background the thinking, as elaborated in the *Bṛhadāranyakopaniṣad* that the food is meant for everybody, the Creator having created it for all: *idam evāśya tat sādharmaṇam annam yad idam adyate*²⁰. A piece with this thinking is the declaration of the *Gītā* that those who cook only for themselves, those sinners (just) eat sin: *bhuñjate te tv agham pāpā ye pacanty ātmakāraṇāt*²¹. A human being is a part of the Cosmic Order. Whatever he has from this Order, he has to share with others.

Even though charity has won high praise from ancient thinkers, it has elicited from them certain riders too. These are threefold. One, the money should have been self-earned. Two, the charity should conform to one's capacity so that one may not have to repent later: *dānam sattvमितam dadyān na paścāttāpadūṣitam*²². Three, gifting of money should cause no torment or misery to one's own people and others:

*aparābādham akleṣaṁ svayatnenārjitaṁ dhanam |
svalpaṁ vā vipulaṁ vāpi deyam ity abhidhīyate ||
śakte 'parajane dātā svajane duḥkhajīvinī |
madhvāpānaviṣādaḥ sa dharmāṇāṁ pratirūpakaḥ ||*²³

"He who gives to others who are self-sufficient while his own people are living a miserable life, is a mere replica of *dharma*, a false *dharmātman*, the drinker of wine and swallower of poison".

The ancient texts have also taken care to emphasize that even if one is in a position to accept charity one should refrain from it: *pratigrahasamartho 'pi na prasajyet parigrahe*²⁴. Such a person earns for himself the prosperous worlds to which repair the philanthropists.

Charity, *dāna*, forms the cornerstone of the thinking of India. It is a duty, *dānam dharmah*²⁵, which one has to perform. Without it there is no good name, *na dānena vinā yaśaḥ*²⁶. It has to be given willingly, with a smiling face, *smitena* and with dignity, *satkārapūrvam*²⁷. No condemnation is enough of one who does not give. He is a far weightier burden on the earth than the trees, the mountains and the oceans, *tena bhūmir atibhāravatīyam, na drumair, na giribhir na samudraiḥ*²⁸. Nothing can more tellingly express the feeling of revulsion for him than the trisyllabic word *arāti*, enemy, which etymologically means 'one who does not give', *nāsti rātir dānam yasya*. The Indian society looked upon such a person as its enemy !

Reference

1. *Sarvārthasiddhi*, 6.12.
2. *Tattvārthasūtra*, 7.38.
3. *Taittirīyopaniṣad*, 1.11.
4. 17.20.
5. 17.21.
6. 17.22.
7. *Ma. Kau.* 4.55-61.
8. 1.8.

9. *Agnipurāṇa*, 211.54.
10. *Raghuvamśa*, 1.18.
11. *Atharvaveda*, 3.24.5.
12. *Naiṣadhīyacarita*, 5.83.
13. *Skandapurāṇa*, Ma.Kau. 2.65.
14. 209.29.
15. *Padmapurāṇa*, 3.71.
16. *Śukranūti*, 2.178.
17. Fifth Canto.
18. *Hitopadeśa*, Mitralābha, 161.
19. *Ṛgveda*, 10.117.6.
20. 1.5.2.
21. 3.13.
22. *Cārucaryā*, 18.
23. *Skandapurāṇa*, Ma. Kau. 4.67. Also for similar idea see
Yājñavalkyasmṛti, 1.10.213.
24. *Yājñavalkyasmṛti*, 1.10.213.
25. *Cāṇakyaśūtra*, 155.
26. *Sabhārañjanaśataka*, 42
27. *Nītidviṣaṣṭikā*, 28.
28. *Naiṣadhīyacarita*, 5.88.

Ācāra or Sadācāra

Good Conduct

Indian tradition has laid great emphasis on *ācāra* or *sadācāra*, good conduct, so much so that it has been proclaimed as the highest virtue: *ācāraḥ paramo dharmah*.¹ One not observing it even the Vedas, the purest of the pure, cannot redeem: *ācārahīnam na punanti vedāḥ*.²

The śāstras proclaim the supremacy of *ācāra* which comprises practising a set of rules sanctified by tradition and codified in the texts. These rules are meant to regulate individual conduct for improving the quality of human life by making him fall in line with the order devised to uphold smooth and normal functioning of society. The goodness in the conduct of the individual is relative to his usefulness in social well-being. By following *ācāra*, the time-tested long-evolved code, one leads a more peaceful life. It is *ācāra*, which exercises control on him, and this springs from within. One who follows it is according to the *Devībhāgavata-purāṇa* 'always pure, always happy:

*ācāravān sadā pūtaḥ ācāravān sadā sukhī*³

As per the *Viṣṇudharmottara-purāṇa*, a person, even though possessed of (good) marks, does not imbibe knowledge, nor anything else he aspires, if he is devoid of *ācāra*. Such a man goes to hell:

*sarvalakṣaṇayukto 'pi naras tv ācāravarjitah
na prāpnoti tatnā vidyām na ca kiñcid abhīpsitam*⁴

nobility that would engage teachers by paying them rich rewards and conferring on them the title of Rāja-pañḍita to teach their young ones. For the general public it was the self-effacing teacher with limited wants who was the source of learning the three rs and beyond. The society taking upon itself the duty of taking care of his needs, he would not expect anything from his students except service in exchange for parting with his knowledge. The word *śuśrūṣā* used in the expression *guruśuśrūṣayā* in the verse above needs careful cognizance here. Literally it means 'the desire to listen' formed as it is from *śru* 'to listen' with the desiderative suffix *sa (n)*. Since this desire could be fulfilled only with service (to the teacher of course), it came to mean 'service'. The third means of learning by exchange refers to those people who having attained a level of learning are interested in furthering their knowledge by venturing into other disciplines.

Reference

1. *Gurugītā*, verse 25.
2. *Atharvaveda*, 11.7.
3. *Mahābhārata*, Ādiparvan, Adhyāya 132
4. II. 484
5. *Mālavikāgnimitra*, 1.16
5. *Viṣṇu-Smṛti*, 73.12
6. *Subhāṣitaratnabhāṇḍāgara*, *Sāmānyanīti*, 1.65.257.

Indriyanigraha

Control over the Senses

Indian tradition lays far too much of stress on the control over the senses, and justifiably so, for, the senses, the *indriyas*, as says the Lord in the *Bhagavadgītā*, are impetuous, *pramāthīni* and consequently carry off the mind by force, *prasabham* even if a person were to 'strive and be ever discerning, *vipaścitaḥ*. One who exercises control over the senses, says further the Lord, has his intellect stabilized, *tasya prajñā pratiṣṭhitā*. Self-discipline is not a matter of intelligence, it is that of will and emotions.

Indriyanigraha or control over the senses is counted among the ten characteristic features of *Dharma* as also the five which form the mandatory code of conduct for (all) the four castes. Kullūkabhaṭṭa, the commentator of the *Manusmṛiti* defines it as *viśayebhyaś cakṣurādivāraṇam indriyanigrahaḥ*, to turn back eyes, etc. from the sense-objects which can be possible only through firm resolve. Even that may not always hold, even the ascetics with long years of hard austerities having been seen faltering. This faltering Bhartrhari has noticed in his *Śṛṅgāraśataka* and put it most graphically:

*viśvāmitraparāśaraprabhṛtayo vātāmbuparṇāśanā
te'pi strīmukhapaṅkajaṁ sulalitāṁ dr̥ṣṭvaiva mohāṁ gatāḥ/
śālyānnām saghṛtāṁ payodadhiyutaṁ bhuñjanti ye mānavās
teṣāṁ indriyanigraho yadi bhaved vindhyas taret sāgare//'*

a student, *Brahmacārin* (the term originally signifying a religious student came to signify later a student in general), within himself as a womb, *brahmacāriṇaṁ kṛṇute garbham antaḥ*, a metaphor equating the student to a child in the womb of the mother who gets nourishment from her own body till it is delivered. The teacher would go to the extent of invoking the divine powers to have students from all over:

*ā me yantu brahmacāriṇaḥ.*⁵

The teacher would be at great pains to identify the real seeker of knowledge by putting him to the severest of the severe tests as exemplified by the instances reproduced earlier and after he had identified him, there was no going back for him. He would open floodgates of knowledge in passing on to him whatever he knew hoping that he would excel him. To be surpassed by him was his most ardent wish:

sarvato jayam anvichec chiṣyād icchet parājayam

“One should aspire victory over all others but defeat from the student (there is another reading here: *putrāt śiṣyāt parājayam* with *putrāt* it goes with father: one should aspire for defeat from son. That is the glory for him.) The excelling of the student brings fame to him: *śiṣyaprakarṣo yaśase gurūṇām*.

The *Śāstras* recount three ways for acquiring knowledge, the first, the service to teacher, the second, good amount of money, the third the exchange, one teaching one discipline to the other and learning another discipline from him in exchange:

*guruśuśrūṣayā vidyā puṣkalena dhanena vā/
athavā vidyayā vidyā catruthī naiva vidyate*⁶

These three are the only ones for acquiring knowledge. There is no fourth one.

Of the three ways of acquiring knowledge primacy has been accorded to the service to teacher. The other two are related to a class and a category of people. It is the princely class or the

Upamanyu not having returned, the preceptor went into the forest in search of him along with his other disciples. He shouted for him. Hearing his shouts Upamanyu shouted back that he was in the pit and recounted to him all that had happened. The preceptor asked him to sing a hymn in praise of Aśvins, the divine physicians who on hearing it and being pleased with it asked him to partake of a cake (*apūpa*) to which he did not agree; saying he had first to offer it to his preceptor thus further pleasing them who then apart from restoring his eyesight made his teeth made of black iron turn golden. The preceptor showered on him the same blessings as he had showered on Āruni.

Now it was the turn of the third disciple, Veda whom the preceptor asked to stay in his house and serve him which he did for long braving heat, cold, hunger and thirst without even a murmur like an ox under the burthens of his master, earning thus for himself a shower of blessings from him that included good fortune and universal knowledge.

The other instance pertains to the teacher-pupil duo Prabhākaramiśra and Kumārilabhaṭṭa, the two great authorities on Mīmāṃsā. Kumārilabhaṭṭa refuted many a doctrine of his preceptor (Prabhākaramiśra). At the end of it he was so stricken with remorse that he lit a pyre of chaff and beseeching himself in it burnt himself to death. On the one side was his intellectual honesty in that he refuted the doctrines of his teacher that he felt could not stand scrutiny though they were of his teacher from whom he had learnt the system; on the other was his reverence for his teacher that gnawed at his conscience. Can any other culture throw up such an instance of unquestioned obedience to the dictates of teachers? It is a value which is typical of India.

In this connection the writer of these lines would like to reproduce his own experience. The concept of Time and Space in the *Vākyapadīya* was the topic he was working on for his Ph.D. at the Banaras Hindu University. For this he needed to have a good grasp of the *Vākyapadīya*, admittedly one of the

most abstruse of the Sanskrit grammatico-philosophical texts. There was only one teacher in Varanasi who could teach it. He was Pandit Raghu Nath Sharma Pandey who later immortalized himself by writing the exhaustive commentary 'Ambakartrī' on it. He was staying in a Math in a locality called Kabirchaura while the writer of these times was staying in the Dey Hostel, the last ones among the hostels of the said University with a sprawling campus running into several miles. The only means of commuting with him coming as he did from an average family, was a bicycle that he had bought from the savings from his meagre scholarship. He pedalled to the teacher (Pandit Raghu Nath Sharma) one day early afternoon covering a distance of about 15 KMs. and requested him to teach him the *Vākyapadiya* to which he agreed asking him to come the following day at 2.00 P.M. sharp. Following his instruction he reached his place at the appointed hour. He was asleep. Around 4.00 P.M. he got up and noticing him said 'it is too late now. Come tomorrow at 2.00 P.M.' Without demur he went back. The next day when he went to him he found him preparing his meals. Looking at him he said 'I am preparing my lunch. Then I will have it. Then I have to have some rest. It will not be possible today. Come tomorrow but mind it, it has to be exact 2.00 P.M.' The next day when he went to him he met him in the street. Noticing him he said, 'O, so you have come. Today I have to go somewhere. That is important. Come next day at 2.00 P.M. It has to be 2.00 P.M. sharp.' He left with not strain on his face whatever as usual. The next day when he went to him he said 'he was not feeling well'. It has to be next day 2.00 P.M. He went back with no sign of being upset with regular turn-backs and 24-25 mile commuting going waste. That was the fifth day. When the next day he went to him he was waiting for him. He started teaching him from 2.00 P.M. onwards and continued upto 7.00 P.M. The writer of these lines was completely exhausted, but the teacher would not stop. It was getting dark. A hurricane lamp was lit. The teaching continued. Then he said, 'Sir, you must be tired by now (he had

right thumb. This stunned the lad but he did not flinch. Cut asunder he immediately the thumb and offered it to him thus depriving himself forever of the alacrity in shooting arrows and making Droṇa truthful to his words to Arjuna that there would not be any one who would excel him in archery among his pupils. This was a specimen of devotion to a teacher which has no parallel in human history. With this Ekalavya earned undying fame as an icon of devotion to teacher.

The reverence for teacher is at such a peak that the scholars, the repositories of learning in themselves, would attribute whatever the excellence in their work to their teacher and whatever the otherwise of it to their own self:

*yad atra sauṣṭhavaṃ kiñcid tad guror eva me nahi/
yad atrāsauṣṭhavaṃ kiñcid tan mamaiva guror nahi//*

It was the reverence for his teacher that led the great grammarian-philosopher Bhartṛhari to ascribe his work to his teacher:

*nyāyaprasthānamārgāṅs tān abhyasya svaṃ ca darśanam/
praṇīto guruṇā 'śmākam ayam āgamasangrahaḥ//⁴*

The Sanskrit literature furnishes many instances of the total and unquestioned obedience of the pupils to the word of the teacher. One such as recorded in the *Mahābhārata* runs as follows: There was a sage of the name of Āpoda-Dhaumya. He had three disciples Upamanyu, Āruṇi and Veda. He asked Āruṇi who was from Pāñcāla country to go and stop up a breach in the water course of a certain field. Āruṇi repaired to the spot but could not stop up the breach by ordinary means. He then went down into the breach and lay down there himself. The water was thus confined. After some time Āpoda-Dhaumya enquired of the whereabouts of Āruṇi from his other disciples who told him that he had been sent by him to stop the breach. Āpoda-Dhaumya having approached the place shouted "where are you my child". Āruṇi hearing his voice told him that not having been able to

prevent water running out he had entered himself into the breach. The preceptor then told him that since he has opened the water course he shall thenceforth be known by the name Uddālaka and because he had obeyed his words he would be blessed with good fortune with the Vedas and the Dharmaśāstras shining in him.

The other disciple of his Upamanyu he asked to go and look after the cows. After tending them the whole day he returned in the evening to his preceptor's house. The preceptor noticing him in good physical condition enquired of him as to on what he was subsisting. "On alms", said he. "That is no good," said the preceptor. "You should not use the alms without offering them to me". Told thus Upamanyu continued with tending the cows. When he came back to the preceptor the next day in the evening, the latter noticed his good physical condition. The same question he repeated in answer to which the former (Upamanyu) said that he went abegging the second time and he subsisted on what he got therefrom. The preceptor disapproved of the practice, that leading to the diminishing of the support of others who live by begging which would also prove him to be covetous. Having heard this, Upamanyu went away to tend the cows. Returning in the evening and finding him in good physical condition the preceptor repeated the usual query in answer to which he (Upamanya) said that he was subsisting on the milk of the cows evoking thereby the disapproval of the preceptor for having it without his permission. He listened to it and went about his errand. It was the same story this time too. On the preceptor's query as to on what he was subsisting, he said that he was helping himself with the froth that the calves throw out while sucking their mothers' teats. No good, said the preceptor, for, he was thus depriving the calves of their full share of food. That was unlawful. Upamanyu went back on his errand. This time with nothing to eat and the hunger overtaking him he ate the leaves of the Arka plant which led to the loss of his vision. As he was wandering about, he fell into a pit. The evening fell.

prāpnuyāt. Whatever food is prepared, it is said, is prepared for him, *ārādhyasmā annam ity ācakṣate*.¹⁰

In Sanskrit there are two words for guest, one *atithi*, the other *abhyāgata*. Though they both are taken to mean guest, there is fine distinction in them, the distinction resting on the type of the guests. *Atithis* mean those guests who are not known to the host and *abhyāgatas* those who are known to him, vide comment of Vīrarāghava, Viśvanātha and Śukadeva: *atithayo 'jñātapūrvāḥ, abhyāgatā jñātapūrvāḥ* under the *Bhāgavata* prose passage *yas tv iha atithīn abhyāgatān va*.¹¹

One of the most interesting aspects of Indian social life has been the absence of hotels, motels and inns. There is no word in Sanskrit for them. Not that there was no movement. Pilgrimage was the necessary religious duty of the people and it would extend from one corner of the country to the other. It was the wish of every Indian in the ancient and the medieval period – it is fairly strong even in the modern period among the devout Hindus – to cover the four Dhāmans, the holiest of the holy places, each located in each direction, Puri in the East, Dwaraka in the West, Rameshwaram in the South and Badrinath in the North, besides visiting the seven cities Ayodhyā, Mathurā, Māyā, Kashi, Kanchi, Avantikā and Dwaravati (Dwaraka) which would help him attain salvation. Apart from pilgrimages caravans of traders and merchants went about with their ware. The Hindi/Urdu word Sarai entered into Indian vocabulary in the medieval period. Prior to that, the wayfarer would be accommodated and fed by members of the society. When the sun would be setting a wayfarer approaching some one and not getting help from him in accommodation and food would, it was believed, walk away carrying with him the merit, *punya*, of that person:

There is a wellknown saying in Sanskrit: *ati sarvatra varjayet*, 'one should avoid excess everywhere'. The excessive regard and respect shown to guests, especially the unknown ones, would have led to antisocial elements exploiting the hospitality that would have occasioned the warning: *ajñātakulaśīlasya vāso*

deyo na kasyacit,¹² "one should not admit into one's house one whose family (background) and nature are not known". In the midst of all the hype for consideration and respect for guests, there had appeared warnings early enough that the guest is he who is good (lit. achieved goodness) *yaḥ śreṣṭhatām aśnute sa vā atithir bhavati*¹³ and a vile person, *asat*, is not shown respect that goes with guesthood *na vā asantam ātithyāyādriyante*¹⁴.

India has suffered enough for being overconsiderate to guests and extending hospitality to any and everybody without assessing their motives. While keeping up the tradition of generous hospitality, a note of caution is necessary in extending it to those whose motives are not clear.

References

1. 1.1.26.63
2. *Atharvaveda*, 2.6.8.25
3. *Ibid.*, 9.6.8.38
4. *Ibid.*, 9.6.7.24
5. *Taittirīya-Brāhmaṇa*, 1.1.4.
6. *Kāthopaniṣad*, 1.9.
7. Act IV, beginning
8. *Taittirīya-Brāhmaṇa*, 1.1.1.
9. *Abhijñānaśākuntala*, Act I, after verse 13.
10. *Taittirīyopaniṣad*, 1.10.
11. V.26.45
12. *Hitopadeśa*, 1.56
13. *Aitareya Āraṇyaka*, 1.1.1.
14. *Ibid.*

company with good men, the sons and the animals. The boy asked for the three boons. What these boons were and how Yama was compelled by the boy to answer the most fundamental of the questions rocking the human mind since ages as to whether something remains of a person after death or it is all closure for him is another matter. Emphasis here is that even Yama, the god of death is not exempt from the normal duty of honouring a guest, of all a guest of the Brahmin class.

In the case of *atithi-satkāra* it may be worthwhile to reproduce the story of an ascetic called Mudgala as found in the *Mahābhārata*. He was a man of limited means subsisting on gleaned corn ears, *śiloñcha*. He lived in Kurukṣetra engaging himself in sacrifices with oblations comprising *ghee*, food and the like (but not animal sacrifice). He would collect every fortnight a *droṇa* measure, approximately 32 or 64 seers rice. Whatever was left of it after deities and guests had been served he would use for himself and his family. The feeding of the guests led to so much of increase in the quantity of rice that even a hundred Brahmins could be fed with that. Mudgala's fame in feeding the guests reached in course of time the ears of the sage Durvāsas who approached him for food. He was received in all honours by the latter. He ate up the entire food. This he did for six times with no reaction of any sort from Mudgala who would feed him in all peace in complete disregard of his own hunger however acute. This pleased Durvāsas immensely. He blessed him that he would go to heaven in corporeal form, he having subdued the senses and been endowed with fortitude, self-control, tranquillity, compassion, truth and *Dharma*. As soon as he finished, a divine messenger, *devadūta*, appeared before him with an aerial car, *vimāna*, to take him to heaven. Then ensued the conversation between Mudgala and the divine messenger. Before repairing to heaven Mudgala wanted to know the good and the bad points of heaven. The divine messenger told him that everything was fine in heaven. It has all the joys, all the pleasures. The only bad thing about it is that the

celestial beings have to return to the earth after the fruit of their good actions has exhausted itself. Mudgala had no liking for such heaven. He wanted a state wherefrom there would be no return. That is Viṣṇu-loka said the divine messenger. Mudgala preferred it. He did not go to heaven. He continued on the earth subsisting as usual on the gleaned ears of corn and in a state of pure consciousness where praise or abuse did not matter to him. Lump of earth, stone, gold or pearl were the same for him. He attained *nirvāṇa*, salvation.

There was a proper code of conduct for guests. They could not just barge into somebody's house, known or unknown. They had to announce their arrival with timeworn socially acceptable terminology as is inferrable from the Durvāsas episode in the *Abhijñānaśākuntala*. On approaching Kaṇva's Āśrama he announces his arrival with the words *ayam aham bhoḥ*,⁷ 'O, here have I come.' On hearing this one of Śākuntalā's friends Anasūyā says "it seems to be the announcement by a guest", *atithinām iva niveditam*. This announcement was sufficient to alert the host to get ready to receive the guest with proper courtesies like an honorific offering, *arghya*, the water for washing the feet, *pādyā* and the same for sipping, *ācamanīya* and a seat, *āsana*. He should be spoken to with sweet words, *ghṛtair bodhayatātithim*⁸. To receive the guest with full honours was the duty cast on the host. Kaṇva before leaving for pilgrimage for Somatīrtha entrusted this duty to his daughter Śākuntalā, *duhitaram śākuntalām atithisatkārāya niyuja — somatīrtham gataḥ*⁹. It was an offence not to carry out this duty. Being lost in the thoughts of Duṣyanta Śākuntalā did not fulfil this duty. That was the genesis of the curse that was pronounced on her by the fiery sage Durvāsas, the curse that changed the course of her life.

Any one come to one's house was not to be turned away, *na kañcana vasatau pratyācaksīta*, that is a religious act, *tad vratam*, by whatever means be it. Enough food should be arranged for him, *tasmād yayā kayā ca vidhayā bahv annam*

Atithisatkāra

Respect for Guests

Indian tradition accords highest respect to guests, *atithis*. A pupil on completion of education is instructed by his teacher to treat guests as deities: *atithidevo bhava*. These words occurring in the Śikṣāvallī of the *Taittirīya-upaniṣad* have been adopted by the Ministry of Tourism as the motto reflecting as they do the ethos of India.

It is not necessary that the guest be known to the host to deserve hospitality. The *Nārada-purāṇa* articulates firmly the view that one come from another village with no (background) information about his name and family is termed by the wise as *atithi*, guest. He is to be worshipped like Viṣṇu :

*ajñātagotranāmānam anyagrāmād upāgatam/
vipāścito 'tithim prāhur viṣṇuvat tam prapūjayet//¹*

It is imperative that the food should first be offered to a guest. One should have it after he had had it. Were he, the host, have it first, he would lose his name and fame:

*kīrtim ca vā eṣa yaśas ca gṛhāṇām aśnāti/
yaḥ pūrvo 'tither aśnāti²*

The same idea is echoed in another *mantra* of the *Atharva-veda*:

aśitavaty atithāṁ aśnīyat³

This is due to the firmly grounded belief that all sins of the person whose food the guest eats are destroyed (lit. burnt) :

sarvo vā eṣa jagdhapāpmā yasyānnam aśnāti⁴

Nobody should remain without food in the householder's house, enjoins the *Taittiriya-Brāhmaṇa*:

nāsyā brāhmaṇo 'snāśvān gr̥he vaset⁵

Even Yama, the god of Death felt sorry for Brahmin guest being in his house without food for three nights and felt impelled to offer him three boons in expiation for this violation of tradition:

tisro rātrīr yad avātsīr gr̥he me

'naśnan brahmann atithir namasyah/

svasti me'stu

tasmāt prati trīn varān vṛṇīṣva//⁶

The story as goes in the *Kaṭhōpaniṣad* is: Desirous of heaven the sage Vājaśravasa gave away all that he possessed. He had a son of the name of Naciketas. When the presents were being distributed filial anxiety entered the heart of Naciketas who was still a boy. He saw barren and consequently useless cows being given away as present. Joyless are the heavens to which repairs the person who gives such presents, thought he to himself. Taking himself to be the one who belongs to his father he asked him as to whom he would give. The father keeping quiet, he repeated the query twice and thrice. The infuriated father yelled out 'unto death I give thee'. Since these were the words of a ṛṣi they had to come true. The boy reached the abode of Yama, the god of death. Yama was away. He stayed in his house three nights without food. Yama was struck with remorse in noticing him in that state. As a recompense to the inconvenience undergone by him he offered him three boons. Yama knew that if a Brahmin guest were to stay in some one's house without food he would take away all his hope, expectation,

“Viśvāmitra, Parāśara and the like just subsisted on air, water and leaves. Even they lost control over themselves by just looking at the beautiful lotus-like face of a woman. The (ordinary) men who help themselves with rice with dressing of ghee and milk or curd, were they to exercise control over the senses, it would be like the mount Vindhya swimming in the ocean.”

Aśvaghoṣa is very right when he says that one may or may not suffer torment from an enemy but one does suffer that from the sense organs everywhere and always :

*dviṣadbhiḥ śatrubhiḥ kaścit kadācit pīḍyate na vā/
indriyair bādhyate sarvaḥ sarvatra ca sadaiva ca/β*

It is because of the senses losing control and going astray that one is advised to avoid being with mother, sister and daughter in a secluded place:

*mātrā svasrā duhitrā vā na viviktāsano bhavet/
balavān indriyagrāmo vidvāṁsam api karṣati/β*

The senses are so overpowering that they would pull (to wards the sense objects) even a wise man.

The senses are to be put under control is just fine. But what can exercise control over them ? The answer is simple. It is the mind. The Lord in the *Bhagavadgītā* compares the senses to horses and the mind to reins: *indriyāṇi hayān āhur manah pragraham eva ca*. It is the mind that is to rein in the *indriyas*, the senses that like to break loose. But the mind itself may need control. It has its own ways of working. There is certain built-in mechanism in it. By its very nature it is impetuous, *pramāthi*, forceful, *balavad*, wayward, *drḍham*. It is as difficult to control it as it is the wind, *tasyāhaṁ nigrahaṁ manye vāyor iva suduṣkaram*. To control it is difficult, no doubt, but not impossible. It can be brought under control by *abhyāsa*, constant practice and *vairāgya*, detachment. And it is here that the intellect comes in. It is this that gives direction to the fickle mind. But the intellect may have its discursiveness. The intellect,

the *buddhi*, the discriminatory faculty cannot be allowed to wander about. It has to be one-pointed. A determined effort is necessary to get the mind under the control of *buddhi* out of its natural habit of rambling from object to object. It has to cultivate – and it is here that *abhyāsa* comes in – steadiness. An unsteady mind cannot think clearly, cannot concentrate on a job and cannot do any work efficiently. Scientists, explorers and thinkers who made great discoveries subdued their senses, concentrated their attention and got absorbed in a single thought of finding a solution to a problem. Even amongst the most talented of the personalities few have the penetration and the absorption of the degree required of success. It is what the Lord terms in the *Gītā* as the *vyavasāytmikā buddhi*.⁴ With this *buddhi* the mind would work straight, the senses would function in straight direction being directed as they would be by mind. It is a common enough experience that when a person is engaged in a singleminded pursuit, even the hunger and the thirst would not torment him. There is purpose in life then, the purpose which is the fountainhead of fulfilment.

To exercise control over senses, mind and *buddhi*, as said earlier, is not easy. Still there is no harm in trying for it. For, the end result is attainment of peace, *śānti* which is the source of happiness, *sukha*. One who has developed this control over the senses, wherever he may dwell, that place would be Kukrukṣetra and Naimiṣa. He would then have conquered the whole world.

Reference

1. Verse 65
2. *Saundarananda*, 13.32
3. *Manusmṛti*, 2.215
4. 2.41

proof positive of Sītā's purity and the other of Sītā being alive and could be restored to her consort if everything went well, the objective in which he eminently succeeded, the objective which had propelled him to go all the way to Ayodhyā, even though uninvited, in spite of the fact—and this really is strange—that all high and the mighty of the sages of the time had received the invitation and were participating in the sacrifice and camp in the vicinity of the city under his own arrangements. On coming to know from the young reciters about the composer of the poem, Rāma invited him and requested him to bring Sītā along which he did to make Sītā, as per Rāma's wish, pledge her purity in the assembly of the sages and the other important people. Presenting Sītā before Rāma and the congregation Vālmiki declares: "I have practised penance for thousands of years. May I not reap the fruit of it if Sītā is touched by sin":

*bahuvārṣasahasrāṇi tapaścaryā mayā kṛtāi
nopāśnīyāṁ phalaṁ tasyā duṣṭeṣvāṁ yadi Maithilī*³¹

This is the sage Vālmiki who stakes his *tapasyā* of thousands of years for the sake of a hapless lady. This is an instance of compassion unmatched in the annals of the world.

An equally unmatched incident as recorded in the *Mahābhārata*³² is that of King Śibi who to save the life of a pigeon taking refuge with him (for fear of a hawk chasing it) refused to part with it and offered his own self as food for the latter.*

* As goes the story Indra and Agni out to test the righteousness of King Śibi known for it took the form of a hawk and pigeon respectively, the latter going into the thigh of the king to save itself from the former who was chasing it. The king assured the pigeon protection and would not let it go inspite of the cogent pleadings of the hawk. The hawk would not accept any other creature as a substitute either. It relented only to the extent of accepting the flesh of the king equal in weight of the pigeon which the king sliced off from his body and put on the scale. The pigeon weighing heavier every time he did it, he with all the flesh sliced off climbed on to the scale himself winning thereby undying fame for his compassion in rescuing a creature come to him for refuge and an instant place in heaven.

A vast corpus of literature going by the name of Purāṇas furnishes a number of instances wherein the qualities of kindness and compassion are depicted. Since it is not possible to take up all those instances here for constraints of space, we shall have to confine ourselves to only a few, the more telling ones among them. The *Viṣṇupurāṇa*³³ records the story of the sage Aurva who saved the life of an unborn son of King Vāhu who could not be delivered because of a poisonous substance administered to his mother by a co-wife out of jealousy. The delivery postponed indefinitely, the king died seven years after it was due, his wife still carrying and not able to deliver, resolved to end her life, a resolve that she was made to give up by the sage. Not only that. The sage helped her deliver the child and brought it up under his care with the prescience that he would do good to society. The sage for his efforts was motivated solely by consideration of welfare of humanity. He had no personal axe to grind in all this.

The *Brahmapurāṇa*³⁴ recounts a very touching story of a pigeon couple of which one, the female one, was caught by a hunter. As chance would have it, the hunter came to spend the night under the same tree where the male of the couple was perching. In the night the female one responded to the chirping of her mate and declined the former's proposal to free her. She found no fault with the hunter for, according to her (the female pigeon) he was just following his profession. She even went a step further. She suggested to her mate that he take the hunter as guest and offer him food which he did by offering himself as food to him leaving him stunned and speechless.

The same Purāṇa in its 92nd Chapter recounts the story of a woman Mahī who getting widowed at a very young age went out to have an experience of the world leaving her young son in the care of the sage Gālava. In the course of her wanderings she turned into a prostitute. The son when coming of age also went out for the same purpose. As chance would have it, the mother and the son run into each other and for a while the son takes the

mother as his mistress. When they come to know over a period of time the identity of each other, they want to end their life from which they are prevented by compassionate Gālava who leads them to right path.

Of the nine virtues with which the Buddha is credited one is that of compassionate conduct: *itipi so bhagavā arcām sammāsambaddho vijjacaraṇasampanno sugato lakavidu anuttaro purisadammasarathi sattha devamanussānam buddho bhagavei*, "the exalted one, the accomplished destroyer of defilements, a Buddha perfected by himself, complete in clear knowledge and compassionate conduct, supremely good in presence and destiny, the knower of the world, the incomparable master of men to be tamed, the teacher of celestials and men, the awakener and the Lord by skilful means apportioning Dhammas." As a matter of fact, it forms the cornerstone of the Buddhist ethos, Lord Buddha himself epitomizing it in his life which is clearly borne out by the following incident.

A certain Bhikkhu was once sick with dysentery and lay fouled in his own urine and excrement. As the Buddha was going the round of the lodgings with disciple Ānanda he came to that Bhikkhu's dwelling. When he saw him lying in the condition he was, he went up to him and said: "What is your sickness Bhikkhu?" It is dysentery, Blessed One, said he. "But Bhikkhu, have you no attendant?" "No, Blessed One." "Why other Bhikkhus do not look after you?" "I am no one to the Bhikkhus, Lord; that is why they do not look after me." Ānanda brought some water. Both poured it and washed the Bhikkhu, raised him up and put him on the bed.

With this as the occasion and this as the reason the Buddha summoned the Bhikkhus and asked them: "Bhikkhus, is there a Bhikkhu sick in a certain dwelling?" "There is, Blessed One." "What is that Bhikkhus's illness?" "He has dysentery, Lord." Has he anyone to look after him. If he has a preceptor, he (the preceptor) as long as he lives, look after him till his recovery. His teacher, if he has one, do likewise. Or his pupil or one who

has the preceptor or one who has the same teacher. If he has none of these, the community should look after him. Not to do so is an offence of wrong doing, for compassion must be voluntary and eternal."

The following Dhamma talk is also very important to show the importance and role of compassion in Buddhism.

A certain youth who lived in Savatthi heard a teacher preach Dhamma. He yielded his heart to the Sanona, went forth to homelessness and after full admission to the Sangha became known as the Thera Tissa. As time wore on, an eruption broke out on his body. At first it appeared in the form of boils no bigger than mustard seeds but as the disease progressed they assumed successively the size of kidney, beans, chick-peas, jujube stones, emblyio myrobalans and then beael fruit. Finally they burst open and his whole body got covered with open sores winning him the nickname Thera Putigatta (rottenbodied) Tissa. After a time his bones began to disintegrate and no one was willing to take care of him. His under and upper robes which were stained with dry blood, looked like fibrous pancakes. His fellow residents, unable to care for him, cast him out and he lay on the ground without anyone to look after him. The Buddha took pity on him. He knew that Bhikkhu Tissa was ripe for Arhantship. He thought to himself: "That Bhikkhu has been abandoned by his associates; at the present time he has no other refuge than me." Accordingly he went to the hall where fire was kept. He washed the boils of the Bhikkhu, placed him on the brazier, waited in the fire room for the water to boil and when he knew that it was hot, went and took hold of the end of the bed where the Bhikkhu was lying. He caused a measure to be brought and sprinkled hot water. Then he went and taking his stand near Tissa, moistened his body with hot water and rubbed and bathed it and then changed the robes. With his heart full of compassion he took his stand at the pillow and said to the Bhikkhu: "Bhikkhu, consciousness will depart from you, your body will become of no use." At the conclusion of his teaching

Thera Putigatta Tissa attained Arhantship and passed to Nibbāna. The Buddha himself performed his funeral rites over the body and taking the relics, caused a shrine to be erected.

The following address of Lord Buddha to the Bhikkhus tellingly underscores the importance that he attached to compassion: "O, Bhikkhus, the secure, safe path leading to joy has been opened by me, the treacherous path blocked off. Bhikkhus, whatever may be done out of compassion by a teacher seeking the welfare of his disciples, that has been done by me out of compassion for you. So be compassionate and full of love."

The compassion of Lord Buddha extended just for the well-being of society has justly been termed *Mahākaruṇā*, 'The Great Compassion.' This is not peculiar to the Buddha alone. It characterizes the Supreme Entity in the entire Indian tradition. The Lord is *Karuṇāvaruṇālaya*, the ocean of *Karuṇā* or *karuṇāvātāra*. It is through His *Karuṇā* that he runs the entire show of the universe.

Reference

1. 59.43.
2. 1.2.158.
3. 5.3.76.
4. *Mālavikāgnimitra*, Act III.
5. *Mālatīmādhava*, Act X.
6. *Raghuvamśa*, II.63.
7. Ed. Kale, M.R., Gopal Narayan & Co. Bombay, 1920. Footnote, p. 64.
8. Act III.
9. Act VII, after verse 24.
10. *Uttaramegha*, verse 52.
11. II.35.
12. *Raghuvamśa*, IX.80.
13. III.3.
14. Ed. Kale, M.R., Gopal Narayan & Co., Bombay, p. 30.
15. p. 134.
16. p. 61.

17. *Gītā*, 1.28.
18. *Kumārasambhava*, V.26.
19. *Adhyāimakalpadruma*, 10.11.
20. 6.11.
21. *Raghuvamśa*, VIII.67.
22. Act II.
23. *Uttaramegha*, 30.
24. I.135.
25. *Manusmṛti*, 8.350.
26. *Kāmandakīyanūṭisāra*, 36.
27. 1.2.11.
28. 1.2.13.
29. 1.2.15.
30. 1.2.40.
31. *Rāmāyaṇa*, Uttarakāṇḍa, 96.19.
32. *Vanaparvan*, 131.
33. IV.8.
34. Chapter 80.

Cittaśuddhi

Purity of Mind

Nature has endowed man with all kinds of feelings, good or bad, the good feelings like love, compassion, sympathy, contentment, the bad feelings like envy, jealousy, aversion, hatred and so on. It is for him now to choose between the two. If he goes in for the good feelings, he will have his mind in peace. Keeping away the evil thoughts is what is *cittaśuddhi*, the purity of mind. With this purity, *prasāda*, he will steer clear of all his troubles, as says the Lord in the *Gītā*: *prasāde sarvaduḥkhānām hānir asyopajāyate*¹ and when the mind is at peace, is tranquil, *prasannacetasaḥ*,² the intellect becomes at once steadfast and unwavering, *buddhiḥ paryavatiṣṭhate*. It has no prevarication, no indecision, no ambivalence. With this intellect a person can take clear stand on an issue and adhere firmly to it. Clarity or perspicuity of the mind, therefore, is the prerequisite to clear thinking and right approach to things. That is why the scriptures enjoin cleansing of the mind :

*cittaṁ viśodhayet tasmāt kim anyair bāhyaśodhanaiḥ/
bhāvataḥ saṁviśuddhātmā svargaṁ mokṣaṁ ca vindati*/³

“Hence one should cleanse the mind. What use do have other types of cleansings? He who is pure in mind attains heaven and salvation.” With this tranquillity in the mind one destroys actions, good or bad. A tranquil soul is stationed in his self and attains eternal happiness.

The cleansing of the mind is easier said than done. The Lord agrees with Arjuna's formulation : *cañicalam hi manaḥ kṛṣṇa pramāthi balavad drḍham*.⁴ "O Kṛṣṇa, besides being naturally unsteady, mind is tormenting, strong and unyielding." Its control is as difficult as the control of the wind: *tasyāham nigrāham manye vāyor iva suduṣkaram*.⁵ The Lords's comment at this is that it can be brought under control by *abhyāsa* and *vairāgya*,⁶ practice and detachment.

But then *abhyāsa* and *vairāgya* are not that easy. They are hard austerities in themselves. In Chapter XVII of the *Gītā* the Lord enumerates three types of penance, *sārīra*, bodily, physical; *vāñimaya*, verbal and *māñasa*, mental.⁷ The *māñasa tapas*, penance is the steadfastness of the mind, to have pleasing outlook (=not to have evil thoughts), silence, self-control and purity of thoughts (=casting away the deceptive and cunning thoughts) :

*manaḥprasādaḥ saumyatvañ maunam ātmavinigrahaḥ/
bhāvasañsuddhir ity etat tapo māñasam ucyate*/⁸

Though coming last in the order of mention in the *Gītā*, the *māñasa tapas* is more important than the others, being the base for them. With the cleansing of the mind would be cleansed the speech and the body which would feel the need to purge itself of its impurity/ies. It is the mind, therefore, that has to be cleansed first with conscious effort, *abhyāsa* and the rest of the cleansing would be just a corollary to it. It has to be *sīvasañkalpa*, of good feelings, of good resolve, for, if that were so, the sense-organs, the *indriyas* would be in proper order being at their best. It is the mind only which is the cause of bondage and release: *mana eva mañuṣyāñām kāraṇam bandhamokṣayoḥ*. The *rāga* and *dveṣa*, the love and hatred have their habitat in the mind. A mind freed of these passions would not flounder. It will have all the ease, all the tranquillity.

To achieve this one need not have to renounce the world. One can be in the thickness of worldly affairs and still remain

unaffected by them. Since he would have developed detachment, his actions would not be tinged with subjectivity and would, therefore, be correct. Such a person would develop with mind undisturbed, *anupaplutacetasaḥ*,⁹ such a vision as to be able to see through the past and the future : *atītānāgatajñānam pratyakṣān na viśiṣyate*.

Of the many requirements for achieving *sattvaśuddhi*, the mental purity, one is *āhāraśuddhi*, purity of food. The Upaniṣad declares : *āhāraśuddhau sattvaśuddhiḥ*,¹⁰ pure mind goes with pure food. So does it go with purified body. Hence extreme emphasis on both in Indian culture : *śatam vihāya bhoktavyam sahasram snānam ācaret*, one should set aside hundred things and have food and set aside a thousand things and have bath. Bath leads to physical freshness which leads to mental freshness.

Since the very ancient period the sages have prayed that their mind should have good resolve, *me manaḥ śivasankalpam astu*,¹¹ may we be united with auspicious mind, *aganmahi manasā sam śivena*,¹² may my heart be free from sorrow, *asantāpam me hṛdayam*; I place in front the good thought, *ākūtiṁ devīm subhagāṁ puro dadhe*.¹³

References

1. 2.65.
2. Ibid.
3. *Skanda-purāṇa*, Ma.Kau., 42.63-4.
4. *Bhagavadgītā*, 6.34.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid. XVII.14-16
8. *Brahmabindūpaniṣad*, 2.
9. *Vākyapadīya*, 1.37.
10. *Yajurveda*, 1.37; *Vājasaneyisaṁhitā*, 34.5.6.
11. *Atharvaveda*, 6.53.3.
12. Ibid., 16.3.6.
13. Ibid., 19.4.2.

Dhairya

Fortitude

Dhṛti or *dhairya* is defined in the *Mahābhārata* as that state when one is not affected by happiness or unhappiness : *dhṛtir nāma sukhe duḥkhe yathā nāpnoti vikriyām*¹. To remain even in both happiness and sorrow, not to grieve in adversity and get buoyed up by success is the core of *dhairya*. One who follows this all the time is *dhīra*: *duḥkhair na tapyet na sukhaiḥ prahr̥ṣyet samena varteta sadaiva dhīrah*². Kālidāsa has merely paraphrased it when in the context of Śiva's permission to Pārvatī to serve him though her presence was an obstacle to the concentration of the mind, *pratyarthibhūtām api tām samādheḥ*, he describes the steadfast as those whose minds are not affected even if the cause for the same were there; *vikārahetau sati vikriyante yeṣāṃ na cetāṃsi ta eva dhīrah*⁴. The *dhīras* would not lose self-control even in the worst of the circumstances. By keeping their cool they would tackle many a difficult situation successfully. To remain firm in the face of adversity is a trait of character that is the key to success in life. Mostly inborn, it can be cultivated also under advice from the wise or through determined practice. There do come moments in life when a person finds himself on the verge of losing self-control. Were he to collect himself at that moment, he may be able to chart for himself a new course. Though easier said than done, he has to be firm and not go under the pressure of emotions, sentiments and feelings. That is the purport of the advice of Vasiṣṭha to Aja

not attending to the affairs of the State, as goes the story in the *Raghuvamśa* of Kālidāsa, on account of the grievous loss of his beloved wife Indumatī *drumasānumatoḥ kim antaram yadi vāyau dvitaye 'pi te calāḥ*⁵, "what distinction would be there between a tree and a mountain if they both were to shake under the impact of wind". One has to continue standing up against all odds and not to wither. That is the sign of true conduct. That is how it occupies the first place among the indications, *lakṣaṇas*, of right conduct:

*dhṛtiḥ kṣamā damo 'steyam śaucam indriyanigrahaḥ/
dhīr vidyā satyam akrodho daśakam dharmalakṣaṇam*/6

It is *dhṛti* which is most important. It is this which enables one to accomplish most difficult of the things in the most adverse of the circumstances in life with equanimity which wins appreciation all round. After the anointment of Rāma as Heir Apparent had been announced he was called into his presence by his father through Sumantra, the charioteer, completely oblivious of the goings on in the Palace. As he in high spirits noticing the joy of the people was face to face with his father Daśaratha who with Kaikeyī by his side did not greet him as usual being completely down and out, Kaikeyī told him of the episode of the two boons promised by the latter (Daśaratha) which she had asked for, the boons being coronation of Bharata as king and his (Rāma's) exile in the forest for fourteen years. This sudden turn of events against him did have no impact on him. Neither did he, the noble one, feel sad, nor shaken:

*na caiva rāmaḥ praviveśa śokam*⁷

There was no disturbance in his mind in his proceeding to the forest and leaving the earth (the kingdom) as it would be in the case of the one who is emancipated :

*na vanam gantukāmasya tyajataś ca vasundharām/
sarvalokātigasyeva lakṣyate cittavikriyā*/8

Rāma seemed to lose *dhairya* when he found the cottage bereft of Sītā on coming back to it after killing Mārīca. But he collected himself after some time, formed an alliance with the monkeys and the bears and after a fight with their help with all-powerful Rāvaṇa recovered Sītā.

It is ingrained in the very nature of the great souls to remain steady even in adversity and maintain their cool. As says the *Hitopadeśa* :

*vipadi dhairyam athābhyudaye kṣamā
sadasi vākpaṭutā yudhi vikramah/
yaśasi cābhirucir vyasanam śrutau
prakṛtisiddham idam hi mahātmanām/ᵂ*

“Fortitude in adversity, forbearance in prosperity, eloquence in an assembly, valour in the battlefield, a liking for fame and a strong attachment to study—these are the natural possessions of magnanimous.”

When he launched struggle against the British, Mahatma Gandhi was not unaware of the strength of the mighty British empire. Nor was Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose in raising the Indian National Army with practically no resources. Still they carried on. Sheer persistence paid and they were able to restore the country to freedom. The same is true of the countless freedom fighters who braved unflinchingly the atrocities of the foreign rulers and did not lose heart. They continued to be in high spirits till the last moment.

They were men of steel. It is people like them who achieve their mission. The men of low calibre would just not initiate any venture, the ones of the middle calibre would stop in the middle when faced with obstacles but those of high calibre, even if dogged by obstacles, would not give up what they have initiated:

*prārabhyate na khalu vighnabhayena nīcāiḥ
prārabhya vighnavihatā viramanti madhyāḥ/
vighnāiḥ punaḥ punar api pratihanyamānāḥ
prārabdham uttamagaṇa na parityajanti/ᵂ*

The sane advice is that one should not give up steadiness, fortitude, even if time is not favourable :

*tyājyaṃ na dhairyaṃ vidhure 'pi kāle*¹¹

If one could control oneself, the possibility is that one may succeed: *dhairyāt kadācid gatim āpnuyāt saḥ*.¹² Even if there is shipwreck, a brave person would not flinch from taking to swimming. History furnishes instances when people actually swam the ocean. The classic example is that of Veer Savarkar who had jumped into the sea in the icy cold winter near Paris!

If one were to look for the criterion for steadfastness, its definition in simple understandable terms, one has to turn to Kālidāsa :

*vikārahetau sati vikriyante yeṣāṃ na cetāṃsi ta eva dhīrāḥ*¹³

“They alone are self-controlled whose minds are not affected, even if the cause thereof is present.”

Another definition of steadfastness could be “to maintain uniformity in both adversity and prosperity” :

*sampattau ca vipattau ca mahatām ekarūpatā/
udaye savitā rakto raktaś cāstamaye tathā* //¹⁴

“The great remain the same both in prosperity and adversity. The sun is red when it rises, it is red when it sets.”

True it is that such people are rare in this world :

*sampadi yeṣāṃ na haṛṣo
vipadi viṣādo raṇe ca bhīrutvam/
taṃ bhuvanatrayatilakam
janayati janani sutaṃ viralam* //¹⁵

“A mother rarely gives birth to a son, an ornament of the three worlds, who does not rejoice in prosperity nor does feel sorrow in adversity and is firm in battle.”

Such a person who has made fortitude or forbearance natural to him would never give it up even if he were to be oppressed

[by adversity]. The flame of fire even when overturned never proceeds downward:

*kadarthitasyāpi hi dhairyavṛtter
na śakyate dhairyaguṇaḥ pramārṣtum/
adhomukhasyāpi kṛtasya vahner
nādhah śikhā yāti kadācid eva//¹⁶*

The people endowed with steadiness never allow their minds to waver or to lose their clarity. That is their forte. Were they to do so, they would not be steadfast then. It is these people who once having taken a resolve would not budge even when faced with myriad problems: *krcchre 'pi na calaty eva dhīrāṇāṃ niścalaṃ manaḥ*. Obstacles would look too small before their will power. The earth would give to them the look of the house courtyard, the ocean of a canal, the nether world of a patch of land and Sumeru an ant-hill:

*aṅganavedī vasudhā
kulyā jaladhiḥ sthalī ca pātālam/
valmikaś ca sumeruḥ
kṛtapratijñasya dhīrasya//¹⁷*

Many of the explorations and inventions owe themselves to such people. Who knows how many years they spent in deep impenetrable forests to study the wild life or in the oceans to explore the marine life exposing themselves to all sorts of risks. Many of them even sacrificed their lives. It needed a Stein to discover manuscripts in the Gobi desert and a Rahul Sankrityayan to find them in Tibet and an S.R.Rao to discover the submerged Dwaraka, an Edmund Hillary and a Sherpa Tenzing to conquer Mount Everest and a host of astronauts to conquer space with a landing on the moon and an attempt to land at the Mars. It is to such people, the human dynamos, that humanity owes much of its progress.

Once they chart a course for themselves, there is no going back for them. They would not stop till they achieve their

objective : *na niścītārthād viramanti dhīrāḥ*.¹⁸ No amount of inducements or the scare of something untoward happening to them would deflect them from their course. As says Bhartṛhari in support of his assertion that the steady ones do not rest till they achieve their mission; the gods did not rest content [while churning the milk ocean] by hitting upon valued gems, nor did they get scared with deadly poison.¹⁹ They did not rest till they had laid their hands on nectar. Further on he terms that person to be steadfast in real sense to whom the arrows of the side-glances of the damsels do not pierce, nor does the heat of the fire of anger singe his mind, nor pull him towards themselves the manifold sense objects with nooses of greed. Such a person conquers the three worlds :

*kāntākaṭākṣaviśikhā na tudanti yasya
cittam na nirdahati kopakṣānutāpaḥ/
karṣanti bhūrivīṣayāś ca na lobhapāśair
lokatrayam jayati kṛtsnam idam sa dhīraḥ*//²⁰

The same Bhartṛhari asserts at still another place that the *dhīras*, the people firm in their resolve, do not step away from the righteous path, *nyāyyāt pathaḥ*, unmindful of the fact whether those versed in polity speak well or ill of them, whether Dame fortune comes to them or leaves them, whether they die that very day or in another aeon.²¹ Nothing can change their mind resolutely fixed on desired objects like water flowing on a downward course: *ka īpsitārthasthiraniścayam manaḥ payaś ca nimnābhimukham pratīpayet*.²² For such people personal comfort or discomfort have no meaning: *manasvī kāryārthī na gaṇayati duḥkham na ca sukham*.²³ These people, whatever they undertake, carry out relentlessly. A reference may be made here to the classic episode of King Hariścandra recorded in the Purāṇas. He was assigned the duty of collecting tax for the cremation ground. He did not spare even his wife reduced to utmost penury and made her part with a part of her *sārī* when she had repaired to it to say final goodbye to her son. Rana Pratap of Mewar

having made up his mind not to surrender his freedom to the mighty emperor Akbar wandered in the jungles with no food for himself and the members of his family for days on end. He literally had to eat grass but kept his head high. Such people are *dhīras*, the embodiments of the quality of *dhairya* and have carved a niche for themselves in the annals of the world.

It is not only in big things but even in small day to day affairs one should cultivate forbearance to keep the pace of life at an even keel. Our reaction to even a small unpleasant happening has to depict it. Take a hypothetical case of your having a quick breakfast in the morning. Your daughter accidentally knocks over the coffee over your suit that you have just put on to go to the office. You scold her and she starts crying. You then start criticizing your wife for placing the cup so near the edge of the table that your daughter could topple it. An altercation ensues between the two of you. You storm up to change your suit. Meanwhile your daughter is still crying and not yet ready for school. She misses the bus. You rush to drop her to school. Since you are late, you drive fast and get a ticket. You reach office to discover that you have forgotten your briefcase. Who caused all this mess but your own self.

You could have reacted this way. You could tell your daughter "It is okay; be careful in future, finish your breakfast while I go and change and see you off to the bus. You pick up your briefcase and reach office in time in a good mood for the day's work. By maintaining your cool you would have solved the crisis.

With fortitude one passes through many an intractable situation and does not give way to sadness and depression, the source of all miseries. There is a beautiful story that is worth recounting here: A child was crying loudly. His father was trying to distract him to no avail. "I do not want to wear these worn out shoes", the child screamed inconsolably. "All my classmates wear new shoes", the child said innocently.

The father was a poor man with limited resources. He

wanted the child to be happy and contented with whatever he had, but assured the child that he would get a new pair of shoes the next month. When the child was adamant the father told him that he would get his shoes repaired. The child felt happy because he thought the cobbler would not repair the shoes as they were beyond repair.

The father and the child reached the cobbler's place. "Do you play a lot, child", asked the cobbler." I do and just let us know whether you can mend the shoes or not", the child asked rudely. "The shoes are still in good condition and just need a quick fix"said the cobbler looking at the shoes appreciatively.

The child became very angry. He wanted to use harsh words as the cobbler had spoiled his plans for a new pair of shoes. He thought that now he could not persuade his father to get a new pair of shoes. "Are there some jewels on my shoes that you are staring at them for long", screamed the child. "No, my child, I used to play a lot before I lost both my legs in an accident. But I do not feel subdued. I enjoy watching young children like you and thank God Almighty for these eyes", the cobbler replied calmly.

The child was shell-shocked. He was staring at the cobbler and his amputated legs and was wondering as to how he still was a picture of calm and thankful to God Almighty for whatever He had given him. He was still smiling and enjoying life. The child had learnt a valuable lesson of his life and no more was crying for torn and worn out shoes.

If one can maintain one's equanimity and is not too much perturbed by adversity or financial troubles, one can find a way out of one's difficulties. For, with equanimity the mind does not lose clarity and with clarity one can find a way to solve one's problems however intractable they may be. There is always light at the end of the tunnel, as goes the saying. But then one must have the stamina to go up to the end and not get perished in the tunnel itself. For, what are needed are patience, perseverance and strong will which all the word *dhairya* connotes.

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Aucitya

Propriety, Balance

It is necessary to achieve balance in life. All actions of a person need to be governed by the principle of *aucitya*. With that one can lead a trouble free life.

Aucitya is formed from the base word *ucita*, fit, proper, suitable. Now it is for an individual to decide what is fit or proper for him in a given situation. The scriptures, the preceptors, the elders can guide him in this or provide him with necessary inputs to take decision/s.

Aucitya could vary with varied situations. What may be suitable in a particular situation may be unsuitable in another.

What is necessary for *aucitya* is to be clearheaded, the capacity to exercise judgment and to get along with the advice of well-wishers. It also requires knack of assessing situations and sifting the right options from among the many. It also needs acquaintance with social and religious norms transgression of which would contribute to impropriety which may land one in troubles.

Then there are precedents one has to be aware of in taking decisions.

While thinking of *aucitya*, propriety, one has to take note of *anaucitya*, the impropriety, too. The knowledge of negatives would provide a person with the vision for the positive.

Aucitya has different facets, physical, mental, intellectual, spiritual and verbal.

The physical facet first. The *Gītā* enunciates the need for a healthy body:

*yuktāhāravihārasya yuktaceṣṭasya karmasu/
yuktasvapnāvabodhasya yogo bhavati duḥkhahā//¹*

“He who is moderate in food, moderate in recreations, moderate in necessary action, moderate in sleep and moderate in awakening, can practice the Dhyānayoga, meditation, which is the destroyer of grief.”

There is an old anecdote which tellingly emphasizes limited intake of wholesome food to keep off diseases and ailments with the procurement of rightful means. It is said that once the mythical physician Dhanvantari was going in a forest. A bird who knew who he was started chirping : *ko 'ruk, ko 'ruk, ko 'ruk*, which besides representing the onomatopoetic sound of the bird also carried the query *kaḥ aruk*, who is free from disease, who does not court disease. The physician smiled at the clever way of putting forth the query by the bird and answered in the same refrain : *hitabhuk mitabhuk ṛtabhuk so 'ruk so 'ruk so 'ruk*, one who helps himself with wholesome food in limited quantity procured by rightful means is free from disease, is free from disease, is free from disease. The *aucitya* for physical wellbeing is threefold: (i) food should be had in limited quantity, (ii) it should be wholesome and (iii) it should have been acquired by rightful means (this has spiritual dimensions).

It is said that one who eats in limited quantity [actually] eats much : *yo mitam bhuṅkte sa bahu bhuṅkte*, in that he has long life and his total intake of food is much more than that of one who overeats and shortens his life span reducing thereby his total intake of food in comparison to the one who continues to live long.

The texts on Āyurveda prescribe which items of food one should have and in which period of time. They enjoin the eating of fruits in the morning with the exception of banana and cucumber *prātaḥ phalāni bhojyāni kadālīm karkatūṁ vinā*. One

may have curd during the day time but not in the night: *na naktam dadhi bhuñjīta*. The food is classified as per the constitution of the people, *sāttvika, rājasa and tāmasa*. Just as with food, so is it with drink. The rule is that one should have water frequently but each time only in small quantity, *muhur muhur vāri pibed abhūri*.² Further, it is just nectar in the course of the meal and poison at the end of it :

*madhye tad amṛtopaman / bhojanānte viṣam vāri*³

Propriety demands that one should have food in a happy mood. Mark the injunction: *prasannamukho 'nnāni bhuñjīta*. That helps in the digestion. Food partaken in pensive and depressed mood or in a mood of anxiety or worry leads more to harm than good. While eating it is imperative that one should not condemn or find fault with it for that would release such fluids in the body that would turn it harmful; *annam na nindyāt*.⁴ It is also necessary that one should have food in the company of the good people and at a neat and clean place. One should not also allow the time for meals to pass, *bhojanavelātikrame cikitsakā doṣam udāharanti*,⁵ physicians consider it wrong to skip the normal time for meals (a common enough phenomenon these days when under heavy workload people have lunch late afternoons or dinner around midnight or just gulp down a few morsels or help themselves with what goes by the name of junk food or combine breakfast and lunch and have what they call 'brunch'). The rule is: *śatam vihāya bhoktavyam*,⁶ one should keep aside a hundred things and have food first. Just as with food, so with bath. This is even more important. No consideration should overrule it or delay it. "Keep aside a thousand things and have bath first: *sahasram snānam ācaret*.⁷

Coming to verbal *aucitya*, the most important thing is judicious choice of words, as says the *Manusmṛti* :

*dr̥ṣṭipūtām nyaset pādām vastrapūtām jalām pibet/
satyapūtām vaded vācam manahpūtām samācaret*/⁸

“One should set foot purified by one’s sight, drink water purified by cloth, utter speech purified by truth and adopt a conduct purified by mind.” Further on the Smṛti says that one should bear patiently harsh words and not insult anybody. The Śruti enjoins uttering of words coated with honey: *madhumayīm vācam*.⁹ It is imperative that one should avoid insulting speech which is the root cause of all enmities, *sā yoniḥ sarvavairāṇām*.¹⁰

The mental *aucitya*, propriety consists of not thinking ill of anybody, not hatching plots to harm others.

The quality of *aucitya* the *Dharmāmṛta* proclaims to be superior to even a crore (millions) of other qualities: *guṇakotyā tulākoṭim yad ekam api ṭikate*.¹¹ The reason for this is that it is the core quality. The rest of them are its offshoots. With its cultivation many of the wrongs that are likely to surface could be avoided or innocent pursuits may lead to harm if it is not kept up. One may indulge in drinking, gambling, enjoying women, hunting, singing and playing on instruments. It is overindulgence in them which is harmful, as says the *Mahābhārata* :

*pānam akṣās tatha nāryo mṛgayā gītavāditam/
etāni yuktyā seveta prasaṅgo hy atra doṣavān//*¹²

Similarly, to aspire for something may have nothing bad about it but the compulsive wish to have it by whatever means is bad: *aucityam gaṇayati ko viśeṣakāmaḥ*.

It is very difficult to give a precise definition of *aucitya*. Scanning of old literature may not be of much help in this. Not to exceed the limit is one which one can have from the *Rāmāyaṇa* hemistich *sarvatrātikṛtaṁ bhadre vyasanāyopakalpate*,¹³ “everywhere anything done in excess leads to peril”. The context wherein this occurs is the remark of a demoness Vinatā to Sītā to surrender herself to Rāvaṇa the absence of which could mean the end of her life by her being devoured by the demoness guards.

Among the *Ālaṅkārikas* *Aucitya* occurs as a literary theory. Kṣemendra has composed a full text on it under the title

Aucityavicāracarcā where he discusses what should be proper in delineation of Rasas, figures of speech and the Nāyaka-Nāyikas and so on.

Considering the situation in which the word occurs or the negative of it *anaucitya*, figures, it appears it could be defined in simplistic terms as 'that which goes well with a particular time or place, *deśa* or *kāla*¹³.' Anything that agrees with an established custom, the socially accepted norms and time-honoured practices with reference to a particular region (in another region the custom may vary and the norms may be different) is *ucita*, fit and proper. The otherwise of it is *anucita*, improper, propriety and impropriety being conditioned by above factors. If *ucita* is proper, *aucitya* is propriety.

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Audārya

Liberality

The word *audārya* is formed from the word *udāra* which means liberal, magnanimous. The *Nyāyakandalī* explains it as the discernment that invariably follows the right path: *satatam sanmārgavartiniḥ buddhir audaryam*. The discernment is no other than wider outlook. Those who go by this outlook are magnanimous in the real sense. Those who go by the perception that this man is mine and that man is alien are petty. For the magnanimous the whole earth is a (big) family:

*ayam nijah paro veti gaṇanā laghucetasām/
udāracaritānām tu vasudhaiva kuṭumbakam//¹*

To be good to one's own people has nothing special about it. That is as it should be. To be good to opponents or adversaries is what is good in reality. It is this goodness which Rāma shows when he asks Vibhīṣaṇa to perform the last rites of Rāvaṇa after he had killed him, the abductor of his wife and the source of all his troubles in one of the fiercest of the battles terming him to be 'as one belonging as much to him (Vibhīṣaṇa) as to himself :

*maraṇāntāni vairāṇi nirvṛtaṁ naḥ prayojanam/
kriyatām asya saṁskāro mamāpy eṣa yathā tava//²*

“With death our enmity has come to an end and our object has been achieved: he (Rāvaṇa) is as dear to me as he is to you: perform, therefore, his funeral rites.”

An old Sanskrit stanza highlights the quality of magnanimity:

*upakāriṇi yaḥ sādhuḥ sādhutve tasya ko guṇaḥ/
apakāriṇi yaḥ sadhuḥ sa sādhuḥ sadbhir ucyate//^β*

“What special is about one who is good to one who has done him good; he (alone) is said to be good by the wise who is good to him also who has done him harm.”

What is goodness if it has no magnanimity? In this connection it is interesting to recount an old story. It is said that once Jagannātha Triśūlī, a poet friend of Abdul Rahim Khan-i-Khana, the noted litterateur and the occupant of the highest post of Vakil under emperor Akbar whom the poets of his time would repair with their compositions to check out on their quality, recited a couplet composed by him :

*prāpya calān adhikārān śatruṣu mitreṣu bandhuvargeṣu/
nāpakṛtaṁ nopakṛtaṁ nopakṛtaṁ kiṁ kṛtaṁ tena//*

“If by occupying an authoritative post one caused no harm to enemies or obliged no friends and relatives, what has one done?” Khan-i-Khana listened to it, changed only the *mātrā*, the vowel sign, in the first syllable in the second hemistich and recited back:

nopakṛtaṁ nopakṛtaṁ nopakṛtaṁ kiṁ kṛtaṁ tena

The figure of speech in the couplet is Yathāsamkhyā, the same order which would connect *apakṛtaṁ* of the original one with *śatruṣu*, and *upakṛtaṁ* used twice with each, *mitreṣu* and *bandhuvargeṣu*, the friends and the kith and kin. By emending *apakṛtaṁ* to *upakṛtaṁ* and connecting it with *śatruṣu* Khan-i-Khana far surpassed in nobility Triśūlī, because to him the position of authority meant doing good even to enemies! That is *audārya*.

Sītā showed this kind of *audārya* when Hanumat approached her with the news of Rāma’s victory and the destruction of Rāvaṇa after the coronation of Vibhīṣaṇa and sought her

permission to slay all the dreadful demonesses who had tortured her earlier with harsh words and cruel gestures. She asks him not to harm them, they having acted at the behest of their master. She forgives them for all their misdeeds: *dāsīnām rāvaṇasyāham marṣayāmi*.⁴ All her trials and travails she attributes to her own adverse fate. Further on she says: *na kaścin nāparādhyati*,⁵ "who is there who does not err?" Such is her generosity that she says that it is not proper to be cruel to as of them as take delight in sinful act:

*lokahimsāvihārāṇām krūrāṇām pāpakarmaṇām/
kurvatām api pāpāni naiva kāryam aśobhanam*/⁶

In the late medieval period there is the well-known instance of Bhama Shah, the minister of treasury of Rana Pratap. When the latter had been reduced to utmost penury due to relentless battles against the mighty Mughals, it was he who placed his entire ancestral wealth at the disposal of his master so that he could carry on the fight.

Jagadūcarita, a work by a Jain monk Sarvānandasūri (13th—14th cen.) which is still in manuscript records the story of one rich philanthropist Jagadu Shah. A native of Bhadreśvara (Gujarat) he was once moving about outside the city. At that time his eyes caught a stone tied round the neck of a goat. His keen sight could make that out to be a precious stone. He bought it from the owner of the goat at whatever price he asked for it and sold it later after cleaning it which fetched him a hundred thousand gold coins. The stone was one big piece of faultless diamond. With the money thus got, he expanded his trade that included import and export. With the passage of time he earned fabulous wealth.

This wealth, however, did not instil in him a feeling of arrogance. His innate goodness impelled him to spend it liberally in religious activities. He organized a number of pilgrimages, got installed domes of gold on Jain temples, arranged worship of the Five Paramēsthins and engaged himself in many other pious activities.

In Samvat 1312 (A.D. 1255) his preceptor made a forecast that three years from then Gujarat would face terrible famine that would last three years. In anticipation of it he got built hundreds of store-houses of grains and started storing grains in them. The very following year Gujarat suffered terrible drought. It was a tragedy beyond words. People were crying for food. Unable to stand the suffering of the people Viśaladeva, the ruler of the State of Anhilwad, having come to know that Jagaḍū had hundreds of storehouses of grains made an offer to him to purchase the same from him to mitigate the suffering of his subjects. Jagaḍū refused to accept any money for them. He had the gates of his storehouses, numbering as many as 700, opened and distributed the stock of grains accumulated therein for free earning thereby undying fame. To save the honour of the elite he had the *svarnaṇḍas*, big laddoos with pieces of gold inside, to be delivered at their doorsteps.

In more recent times Mahatma Gandhi fought against the British to restore freedom to India, but he had no ill-will for the British people. He was fighting only the British imperialism. There was no ill-will or rancour in his mind for Britishers for whom he had all love and consideration. The same was the case with Jawaharlal Nehru who gladly joined the British Commonwealth, a comity of nations which had thrown off the British yoke under the leadership of Britain.

Kālidāsa furnishes a beautiful example of *audārya* in his *Abhijñānaśākuntala*. In its Sixth Act the Prime Minister refers a case to King Duśyanta for his decision. The chief merchant Dhanamitra dies in a shipwreck. Since he has no issue, his property as per the rule should vest in the State. That is the Prime Minister's opinion. The king, however, has a different take. When he finds on an enquiry that one of the wives of the merchant is carrying, he has it conveyed to the Prime Minister that it is the child in the womb who deserves to inherit the property. Further, he has it broadcast that if anyone among his subjects were to be bereaved, he himself should be taken to be

the kith and kin in place of the one who has left for the heavenly abode:

*yena yena viyujoyante prajāḥ snigdghena bandhunā/
sa sa tāsām ṛte pāpād duṣyanta iti ghuṣyatām//*

It is not rare to find magnanimity, *audārya*, leading to change of heart. The most wicked sometimes get impressed with it and turn a new leaf. Among the Buddhist Jātakas there is one which tells the story of a king of Kāśī called Śīlavat. So good was he that he would not punish even his opponents. Not only that, he would even reward them. Once one of his ministers outraged the modesty of his queens. He reprimanded him and turned him out of his kingdom who then deserted him and went over to the neighbouring king of Kosala and cleverly wining his confidence incited him to invade the kingdom of Kāśī. Much against the advice of his commanders, Śīlavat with his very well-equipped army offered no resistance, preferring to court death rather than shedding blood. Under the orders of the invader the king of Kāśī and his ministers were dug neck deep in the sand of a river. As the jackals approached in the night to make a feast of them the king warded them off by loud hooting. With the scared jackals running away, the sand with their movement got loosened with the result that the king was able to pull out himself and being out himself he helped his ministers also to come out. In the meantime some people came and left a dead body in between the territories of the two Yakṣas. The Yakṣas not being able to divide the body in two equal halves, approached the king who did as asked. At his bidding the Yakṣas took him to the royal palace where the Kosala ruler, finding him in front with a sword in hand, could not make out as to how he could be there late in the night bypassing the guards. The Kāśī king told him all that had transpired. This sent the Kosala ruler to remorse. He was sorry that he was so cruel to a noble person like the Kāśī ruler. He begged him of forgiveness and returned his kingdom to him.

The *Mahābhārata* furnishes a few telling instances of *audārya*. The first one pertains to the period when the Pāṇḍavas were living in exile in the Dvaitavana near a lake as per the terms of Yudhiṣṭhira's defeat in the game of dice in Hastināpura court. Since Duryodhana was now in command, Karṇa and Śakuni wanted him to show off his prosperity to the Pāṇḍavas to incite jealousy in them and cause them despondency by hurting their pride. Under the pretext of visiting the cowherd stations on the outskirts of the kingdom, Duryodhana repaired to the Dvaitavana along with all his brothers, Karṇa, Śakuni and their wives with a large army and citizenry. He ordered his men to set up a camp along the lake to which Gandharvas who had already been there objected. In the fight between them and Duryodhana and his companions the Gandharva lord Citraratha defeated them and captured them. When Yudhiṣṭhira who along with his brothers was nearby came to know of it, he asked his brothers, much against the protestations of Bhīma, to rescue Duryodhana and his entourage, his plea being that there could be dissensions and quarrels within the members of the family but that should be no reason that others should take advantage of it and that the family custom be snapped :

*bhavanti bhedā jñātīnām kalahāś ca vṛkodara/
prasaktāni ca vairāṇi kuladharmo na naśyati/*⁸

When an outsider challenges the family, the wise would not stand it. With this command the Pāṇḍavas fought with the Gandharvas and rescued Duryodhana and his cohorts. That was Yudhiṣṭhira's magnanimity. Any other person in his place would have welcomed the capture of his sworn enemy, relative or no relative, who had been an unending source of untold misery to him.

The same magnanimity Yudhiṣṭhira displays when he asks Bhīma and Arjuna to release Jayadratha who had tried to abduct Draupadī from her cottage when she was alone with all the Pāṇḍava brothers being away on hunting. Having come back and

having come to know from crying Draupadī as to what had transpired in their absence Bhīma and others defeated Jayadratha's army and produced him before Yudhiṣṭhira who pardoned him and ordered his release in spite of the most heinous act of abduction of Draupadī, he being a kinsman. It is a different matter that the same Jayadratha later asked for the boon from Śiva for the defeat of the Pāṇḍavas after propitiating him with penance to which he had agreed with the proviso that the same would be possible on a day when the Pāṇḍavas would not have Arjuna with them.

The *Pañcatantra* furnishes a beautiful instance of magnanimity. According to a story therein a hunter would roam about in a forest with a cage, a noose and a rod in search of a prey. One day he caught a female pigeon and put her in the cage. In the meantime clouds appeared in the sky and there was a heavy downpour accompanied by a strong gale. As the sky cleared, the hunter took shelter underneath a tree and called out that whosoever is there is requested to provide shelter to him, the one tormented by cold and hunger. On the branch of the same tree the mate of the female who was in the cage was pining for her, she not having turned up even so late. The female in the cage on hearing his lamentation cooed out that she was just under the same tree confined in a cage. She advised him to take care of the hunter who has taken refuge with him, that being the *dharma*. To provide warmth to the hunter the male pigeon flew out and brought from somewhere a live charcoal which the hunter placed on the leaves and twigs that he had gathered and lighted the fire. Now to provide food for him he jumped into the same fire. Bereft of him, his mate, the female one, finding no meaning for her life too jumped into the same fire. Now this was too much for the hunter. Overtaken by remorse for all his misdeeds he in the course of his further wanderings noticed a forest conflagration and courted death by jumping into it.

Swami Dayanand Saraswati, the founder of the Arya Samaj was administered poison by one Jagannath alias Kaliya. He

mixed it in milk which the Swami took in the night of September 29, 1883 which gave him immense physical torment and ultimately took away his life. The Swami having come to know of his misdeed not only pardoned him but also gave him some money to enable him to escape to Nepal to avoid retribution.

In more recent history an Australian Christian missionary Abraham Stewart Staines who had been devoting his life in the service of lepers was burnt alive along with his two minor sons in his van parked near his house by some miscreants. His wife Gladys Staines even though in extreme grief at this gruesome event showed no anger and publicly pardoned the miscreants in true Christian spirit—the spirit in which Lord Christ had spoken the words : “O Lord, forgive them. They know not what they do.”

Just as Mother Nature has endowed human beings with many good qualities, she has endowed them with bad qualities too. They are *ahaṅkāra*, ego and *mamakāra*, mineness, the feeling that such and thing is mine, the feeling of possessiveness. It is these two that limit the vision of man. The root cause of all discord, dissension and conflict in life is the feeling that ‘this is mine and this is not’. What one claims as one’s own, one has special attachment for it and what one thinks is of some one else, one has no attachment for it which in other words may mean indifference or aversion for it. The conflict between the Kauravas and the Pāṇḍavas is epitomised in Dhṛtarāṣṭra’s query to Sañjaya, the starting point of the *Gītā*, *māmakāḥ pāṇḍavās caiva kim akurvata sañjaya*. “what did do my sons and those of Pāṇḍu”, the old man forgetting that the Pāṇḍavas too should have been *māmakas*, mine, for him, they being his nephews !

The renunciation of *mamakāra*, it is mine, is what *audārya* is. Nīlakaṇṭha Dīkṣita has very well put it:

*tyktavyo mamakāras tyaktuṃ yadi śakyate so 'yam/
kartavyo mamakāraḥ kin tu sa sarvatra kartavyaḥ/*

“Renounce ownership (the feeling that it is mine), if you can do that. Cultivate ownership but this should be for everything.” The same idea Ācārya Śaṅkara expresses in the words:

*tvayi mayi cānyatraiko viṣṇuḥ
vyartham kupyasi mayy asahiṣṇuḥ/
bhava samacittatḥ sarvatra tvam
vāñchasy acirād yadi viṣṇutvam//¹⁰*

“It is the same Viṣṇu who is in you, in me and elsewhere; through intolerance you are angry with me for nothing. Have the same feeling for everything, if you aspire to be Viṣṇu in all quickness.”

Śaṅkara puts forward a beautiful example of this *mamakāra* : In a large group of people if somebody breaks the news of the death of a son or of a friend, it is only those whose son or friend had died grieve. To the rest of them the news would not cause as much shock or grief as it would to the former because they do not have the *mamakāra*, the sense of belonging to him. If one were to extend one’s sphere, it would cause the same shock and grief to them too. The extension of *mamakāra* is not a theoretical proposition only. It is noticeable often enough in times of natural calamities, the floods, the earthquakes, train or air accidents or in the commonplace happenings of somebody caught up in a flooded river or a burning house when people, total strangers, risk their lives to save others. At that time a drowning man or a man caught up in flames becomes an object of their *mamakāra*. It is one of theirs who is to be saved, thus goes their thinking.

References

1. *Pañcatantra*, 5.37.
2. *Rāmāyaṇa*, VI.111.100-1.
3. *Pañcatantra*, Mitrabheda, 270.
4. *Rāmāyaṇa*, VI.113.39.
5. *Ibid.*, VI.113.43.

6. Ibid., VI.113.44.
7. VI. 23.
8. Vanaparvan, 243.2.
9. *Pañcatantra*, Kākolūkīyam, 133-182.
10. 11.1.1
11. *Bhāgavadgītā*, verse 24.

Kṛtajñatā

Gratefulness

Kṛtajña is formed from the root *jñā* with *kṛta*, *kṛtaṃ jñāti iti kṛtajñah*, one who knows (=acknowledges) [the good] done to him. With the suffix *tal* added to it it becomes an abstract noun, acknowledgement of what [good] is done to one and that is what gratefulness is.

Normally people tend to forget what good one had done to them. Not only that. They try to avoid or ignore him who has been kind to them and done them good. That is human weakness. Such people find mention in the *Mahābhārata* among the six such ones who ignore the one who has done them good, *ṣaḍ ete hy avamanyante janam pūrvopakāriṇam*.¹ One of these six are those who after their purpose is served ignore the one who has been instrumental in accomplishing it, *kṛtārthās ca prayojakam*.² To be other than the general run of people in this respect is very rare. Hence the fulsome praise showered on them by Indian thinkers. They are the blessed people, *kṛtino manuṣyāḥ* for they always remember the good turn done to them. Nothing in this world equals them, neither the moon, nor Kubera, nor the sun, nor Indra:

*kṛtaṃ pareṇā 'py upakārayogaṃ smaranti nityam /
teṣāṃ na tulyo bhuvane śaśāṅko na vā kuberō na ravir
na śakraḥ*/³

The same sentiment Cāṇakya echoes at two places. At one

place he says that a good man would take even a small (lit. of the size of sesame seed) good turn done to him far too much (lit. of the size of a mountain: *tilamātram apy upakāraṁ śailamātraṁ manyate sādhuḥ*. At another place he says that a noble person would not get sleep till he has repaid even a small good turn done to him: *svalpam apy upakāraḁte pratyupakāraṁ kartum āryo na svapiti*.⁴

There is reference to gratefulness in the *Rāmāyaṇa* first in the context of the wait till the end of the rainy season and the setting in of the autumn for proceeding against Rāvaṇa. Rāma has the feeling that Sugrīva will repay the good done to him. A brave person having been benefited does repay the good turn. Were he not to repay the good turn being ungrateful, would hurt the mind of the good people:

*upakārena vīras tu pratikāreṇa yujyate /
akṛtajñō 'pratikṛtī hanti sattvavatām manaḥ*/ṛ

The second time there is reference to it is the inactivity of Sugrīva in tracing Sītā, making Rāma flare up in anger prompting him to dispatch Lakṣmaṇa with a stern message for him. Face to face with Sugrīva he tells him that having first been obliged by friends, one who does not do good to them, he, the ungrateful of all the beings, deserves to be killed:

*pūrvam kṛtārtho mitrānām na tat pratikaroti yaḥ/
kṛtaghnaḥ sarvabhūtānām sa vadhyaḥ plavageśvara*/ṛ

Then he reproduces in ringing tones the verse that had escaped the mouth of Lord Brahmā high in anger when he saw an ungrateful person, the verse admired universally:

*goghne caiva surāpe ca caure bhgnavrate tathā/
sarvasya niṣkṛtiḥ proktā kṛtaghne nāsti niṣkṛtiḥ*//

“The pious provide deliverance for the cow-killer, the wine-biber, the thief, the violator of the vows but not the ungrateful one. There is no deliverance for him.”

should leave out something while doing other's work:

*nānarthiko 'rthasambandham kṛtaghmena samācaret/
arthī tu śakyate bhoktum kṛtakāryo 'vamanyate/
tasmāt sarvāṇi kāryāṇi sāvāśeṣāṇi kārayet//¹¹*

The wise are advised to avoid the sinful, shameless ungrateful (person) *parityājyo budhaiḥ pāpaḥ kṛtaghno nirapatrapaḥ*.

The *Padma-purāṇa* is right in saying that a person who has attained happiness should be grateful. That is in his interest. One who does not know his interest, his life is like that of an animal:

*bhavitavyam kṛtajñena janena sukham iyuṣā/
veti svārtham na yas tasya jīvitam paśunā samam//¹²*

Gratefulness is a quality that does not go with human beings only. Even animals—even the most ferocious ones among them—also have it. There is the famous story of a lion. It had its paw pierced by a thorn. It was writhing in pain. A forester noticed it and pulled out the thorn giving much-needed relief to the animal. The same forester was arrested by a king for some offence. As punishment he was placed before a lion for being pounced upon. The lion had not been given any food for some days. It was terribly hungry as a consequence. It was thought that it would be intense in its ferocity as a result. The lion saw the forester, recognized him as the same one who had pulled out its thorn and did not touch him, let alone devour him. That was the gratefulness of even the carnivorous animal.

The July 21, 2010 issue of the *Hindustan Times* in its column Inner Voice carried a very interesting episode by the contributor Urvashi Goyal that bears reproduction here : “I had just retired. The house that I had built was too big for me. So I rented out a room in the backyard to one Santokh Singh, a mechanic. In the first meeting itself, I had found something unusual in his personality. He radiated peace and happiness.

“Santokh Ji, I shut the main gate at 10.00 P.M. so you must be back by that time”, I told in a tone reminiscent of my service

days. "Madam, that is really good". It will keep me disciplined". He replied with a smile.

A few days later I noticed that he had kept the light of the verandah on throughout the night. When I pointed this to him, he said, "Madam, I am doing this so that people passing through our lane have good visibility. Please don't worry. I will pay for it."

One evening, a friend visited me. After some chatting, she remarked, "The rent you are charging is too low and I feel you should keep a tenant who is of your status". I manufactured a story that my son was coming back from the U.S. and told Santokh to vacate the room.

"Madam, this is indeed good news. You are very lucky. I have seen young progenies only going. There are very few who return. You are very lucky. I will vacate by the month-end."

On the last day of the month, he kept his word. While he was exiting the house, I found a small box in one corner. It had my gold necklace in it, that was not traceable for long. After a pause I said, "Santokhji, were you really not aware that it was gold?" He smiled and said, "Madam, I may be a simpleton but am not an idiot who cannot differentiate between stone and gold." I kept looking at him with disbelief and reverence.

Looking at the departing horse cart, I was feeling too small and his stature looked to me too lofty. An unlettered person had taught me the lesson of life. "No complaints, only gratitude."

There is another episode that also bears reproduction here. "The queue seemed to be unending and every one was restless. They pushed each other and there was a lot of commotion.

A man in the row was particularly feeling uneasy and was looking at his watch repeatedly. He was neatly dressed and was sweating profusely because of the hot weather.

Are you applying for the first time? An old man in the queue asked the man and laughed. The man paid him no attention. He started looking at another direction, ignoring the comments of the old man.

And then he saw a young boy staring at him. He ignored him too.

There were still a handful of people ahead of him. He took out his handkerchief to wipe off the sweat on his face when he realized the gaze of the boy was undeterred. The boy was standing away from the crowd but his stare was direct and unending. He was looking at the man as if he had some thing to say. But his searching eyes made the man somewhat uncomfortable.

Fortunately, soon the turn of the man came and he submitted his documents and handed over a five hundred rupee note to the person at the counter. He was asked to pay the exact amount but he could not; he did not have the change. The people in the queue were getting restive and protesting over the delay.

The man was feeling bad and did not know what to do. He looked around but there was no one to come to his rescue.

Dejected, he was about to leave the counter when suddenly a hand slid into the counter window with the required amount.

The man looked around and saw the same boy standing and handing over the money. Before the man could enquire, the boy said "Sir, Don't be surprised. I am simply returning your money that you gave me at the medical store a year ago when I did not have money and my mother needed the medicines the most."

Both were looking relieved. They smiled at each other and quietly took their different ways."

Sometimes despite dedication and commitment things go wrong. That is when it is important to remember that God has something good for us. Thereby hangs a tale. It was 1998. The writer of these lines was attending the International Conference at Mauritius. Just about that time the famous actor Amitabh Bacchan happened to be there in connection with the shooting of a film. The Conference organizers thought of inviting him to join the event. The actor obliged. In the course of his address he referred to an episode in his life. He recalled that his father, the well-known Hindi poet Harivansh Rai Bacchan, used to say:

"yadi apane man ki ho to accha, yadi apane manki ki na bhi ho to aur bhi accha", if something happens as per one's wish, it is good but if it does not happen that way, it is better. This would baffle Amitabh Bacchan. One day he could not restrain his inquisitiveness. He asked his father, dad, I can well appreciate the first part of what you say; if something goes the way one wishes, it is good but just cannot comprehend as to how it is better if that does not go that way. To this the father replied: "It is then the wish of God and God does not harm anybody". This leads the writer of these lines to a story that he had heard when young. The story goes as follows:

One day a kid on earth came to know that God was distributing apples to humans in heaven. He was so excited that he went to heaven to get the apple. There was a long queue which he joined. When his turn came he held out both his hands to receive the much-coveted present. God gave him a big apple but his tiny hands could not hold it. It slipped and rolled down in muck. The kid was disappointed. God's ministers informed him that he would have to join the queue again if he wanted another apple. The kid did not want to return empty-handed and joined the queue again.

This time the queue was longer than the previous one. While waiting the kid saw people returning with apples extremely satisfied. The kid thought as to why he could not get the apple while others had got it.

When his turn came God gave the apple to the kid and said, "My dear child, last time after giving the apple, I noticed that the apple I gave you was a rotten one and that is why I made it slip away from your hands. Having given you a rotten apple I felt bad and wanted to give you the best apple of the farm. At that time the best apple in the farm was growing and that is why I made you wait for so long. Now the apple that I have given you is the best one in the farm." The kid felt grateful to God for all His kindness and mercy and returned to the earth in all happiness.

Even in the most unwanted and the unpleasant of the situations there could be hidden some good. A human being with his limited perception may not be able to realize it. The good would unfold over a period and then a person would realize as to how he has been saved from the worse situation. He then turns to God and is all gratefulness to Him.

He has reason to be grateful to Him for all that He has given him. The Quran says, "It is He who has spread out the earth for His creatures. Then which of the favours of the Lord will you deny?" He has blessed us with all the faculties including the most valuable one, the faculty of discrimination

It is natural for all of us to nurse the desire of leading a happy and contented life. The first step in this direction, as Rhonda Byrne tells us in the chapter "The Magic" in her book *The Magical Way of Negativity* is to get rid of negative vibes in the body system and be thankful for what we have got in life. She wants us all to look for at least ten things everyday for which we should be happy and grateful.

It should be kept in mind that negative situations arise mostly when there is a lack of gratitude over a period of time. That makes us lose the magic happening in our life. We take things for granted which is a major cause of negativity for it results in complaining and negative thoughts. How can one be grateful in life if one is complaining all the time. Negativity stays far off when you are grateful because you are in a happy and positive state of mind.

The Buddha had said, "Let us rise up and be thankful... We got sick, at least we did not die". Some people are found always complaining about the food served to them. They gripe and crib about it. They have not the vegetable they like or the way they would like it to be cooked or served. They would find fault with the ingredients. The scripture has such people in mind when it says, *annam na nindyāt*, 'do not pick holes with the food', *annam bahu kurvīta*, 'show due respect to food'. We must remember that at least we have the food while the situation is

that millions go to bed hungry. It is not only important for us to be thankful for what we have from the spiritual point of view only but also from the scientific point of view. When we count our blessings our mind gravitates towards the positive. We then start concentrating on what we have and realize how fortunate we are.

Living with an attitude of gratitude will help us focus on what we have as we will then see ourselves living this beautiful and richer life. If this does not make you grateful then the foolproof way of feeling grateful at any time of the day anywhere, in any situation, is to remind yourself of this pearl of wisdom, "If you are miserable about all the things you want but have not got, think about all the things you do not want and have not got".

It is an eternal principle that one should return the good deed: *kṛte ca pratikartavyam eṣa dharmah sanātanaḥ*. That is the norm that one needs to observe. But even if one is not in a position to return the good deed, the minimum that is expected of the beneficiary is a word of thanks in acknowledgement of the good that he has done him. If he does not do that and turns against him for petty gain in life, he hurts him beyond measure. The result will be that his benefactor will have no good vibes for him. With a 'thank you' note one would achieve two things: One, to win over the heart of the benefactor to motivate him to extend the help even next time should the need for that arise. Two, to unburden one's mind of the debt, moral or otherwise, that one may be carrying by receiving the timely help which could be in any form, even in the form of good advice that would have helped one achieve one's goal or helped one come out of a difficult situation.

The writer of these lines is tempted here to reproduce a page from his personal diary. It was 1969 when he had applied for the post of Professor in the Faculty of Oriental Learning and Theology at the Banaras Hindu University (BHU), Varanasi. He was selected for it. His post at that time was that of Reader at

the University of Delhi which also had the post of Professor vacant. The writer of these lines wanted to continue at Delhi and not to shift over to Varanasi but things at Delhi were taking time. He asked for time from BHU to join; he did not want to give up the chance. The BHU gave him six months to join the post. The Delhi University interview was nowhere in sight still. He asked for further extension of time from BHU and still further extension which was granted. One day his father told him to write to the BHU declining the offer—keeping the University waiting all the while was no good, thought he. Accordingly, the writer of these lines wrote a letter declining the offer. He was to post it later in the day, after he had finished his University work. As he was sitting in the staff room of the Arts Faculty of the University of Delhi, pensive and crestfallen, Prof. B. Jinananda, his colleague in the Department of Buddhist Studies noticing that there was something amiss with him came to him and on getting apprised of the whole situation advised him not to decline the offer and ask for further extension. The writer of these lines followed his advice, tore away the letter and asked for further extension which the BHU granted. In the meantime took place the Delhi University interview where he was selected. Jinananda's advice came to him as a morale-booster. When he appeared for interview at Delhi, he appeared with strength; with the feeling that even if he were not to be selected, he had the Professorship of a University, a very prestigious one at that, in hand. What if the scenario could have been like this: I would have declined the BHU offer and would not have been selected at Delhi University! I shall always remain grateful to Prof. Jinananda for his sane advice.

Dr. Sita Ram Shastri, a friend of the writer of these lines once told him that his father used to say that if somebody would give the right direction to a person to reach his destination, the person given the direction should remain grateful to him all his life. That is the true spirit of gratefulness.

The Indian tradition does not stop at a mere acknowledgement

of good done or just repaying it in some form or the other but also repaying it many times more. Says the *Mahābhārata*: *yāvac ca kuryād anyo 'sya kuryād abhyadhikam tataḥ, kṛtaṁ śataguṇam kuryāt, icchanti bahulam santaḥ pratikartum mahat priyam*.¹³ The work goes to the extent of saying that if one has enjoyed the cool shade of a tree, one should not willfully pluck even a leaf of it keeping in mind the earlier good deed [of providing the shade]:

*yasya cādrasya vṛkṣasya śītacchāyām samāśrayet/
na tasya parṇam druhyeta purvavṛttam anusmaran*//¹⁴

References

1. Udyogaparvan, 33.87
2. Ibid. 22.88
3. *Padma-purāṇa*, 39.118
4. *Cāṇakya-sūtrāṇi*, 401
5. *Rāmāyaṇa*, 4.27.45
6. Ibid., 4.34.10
7. Ibid., 4.34.12
8. 6.29.13
9. Śāntiparvan, 173.20
10. Ibid., 172.24
11. Ibid., 140.20
12. *Padma-purāṇa*, 53.103
13. Udyogaparvan, 60.7
14. Virāṭaparvan, 16.19

Akrodha

Absence of anger

Krodha has been defined as *vikṣiptacittatā*, *krodho vikṣiptacittatā*, the agitation in the mind. Patañjali in his *Mahābhāṣya* explains it as a phenomenon noticeable by the appearance of redness in the eyes and the like, prefacing his remark by explaining *kopa* as an internal phenomenon: *kopa āntaro dharmah*, *krodhas caksūrāgādinā paridrśyo bāhyaḥ*. He then brings out the fine distinction between the seemingly synonymous words with the classic remark: *nahy akupitaḥ krudhyati*, one does not become *kruddha* without being *kupita*. *Krodha* is instant, *kopa* is more sustained. That is the dividing line between the two.

Krodha, the agitation in the mind, is the root cause of all troubles. Scripture after scripture advises to put it under control. With this the first casualty is the loss of reasoning. Under its impact one would permit oneself such activities as one would shun in normal state. Rightly has it been said:

*kruddhaḥ pāpaṁ na kuryāt kaḥ kruddho hanyād gurūn api/
kruddhaḥ paruṣayā vācā naraḥ sādḥūn adhikṣipet//
vācyāvācyam prakupīto na vijānāti karhicit/
nākāryam asti kruddhasya nāvācyam vidyate kvacit//*

“What sin can angry person not commit. He may kill even the elders and vilify the pious with harsh words.

The angry person is not able to decide what to say or not. There is no vice that he cannot commit and there is nothing for him which is not to be spoken.”

The mind of the person overpowered by anger is not able to make out as to what he should do and what not: *nahi kopakaluṣita-matiḥ kartavyam akartavyam va vimṛśati*². His whole frame begins to give the appearance generally of the *babūla* tree on fire: *jvaladbabūlavat bhāti kāyaḥ prāyo 'tikopinaḥ*³. *Krodha* causes mental agony, it destroys the world, it uproots *dharma*. One should, (therefore) abjure it:

*krodhamūlo manastāpaḥ krodhaḥ saṁsārasāadhanam/
dharmakṣayakaraḥ krodhas tasmāt tam parivarjayet*//⁴

It is the tormentor (of the mind and the body), it is the root cause of enmity, it is the pathway to downfall, it is the bar to the happiness that goes with peace:

*tatropatāpakah krodhaḥ krodho vairsya kāraṇam/
durgater vartanī krodhaḥ krodhaḥ śamasukhārgalā*//⁵

Kopa may harm the other person against whom it is directed, it certainly harms those who not having control on themselves, fly into it: *ātmanam eva nāśayati anātmavatām kopah*⁶.

It is the faculty of discrimination, *viveka*, that can control anger. If one were to let it go, his state will be like that of a person who rides a wayward horse with no reins to control it. He is bound to slip off the horse at any step:

*buddhivalgām samutsrjya krodhadurvājigo hi yaḥ/
dhāvate patanam yasya sulabham syāt pade pade*//⁷

A person may have been practising penance that is verily the means for salvation. Were he to allow himself to fly into rage, it would not take more than a moment for his penance to get soiled unable to produce the desired result, it being the enemy of all the four aims of life, the destroyer of one's own self as well as of others :

*mokṣasāadhanam apy eṣa tapo dūṣayati kṣaṇāt/
caturvargaripuḥ krodhaḥ, krodhaḥ svaparanāśakah*//⁸

It has been accepted on all fours that it is very difficult to exercise control over anger. *Caitanyacandrodaya* puts it very graphically. Says it "(Even) those who performed the severest of the severe penances accompanied with restraint of passions, self-control, vows, keeping the mind collected, meditation and contemplation of the Supreme Spirit, who were blessed with all the mundane riches, who had renounced the feeling of food, who vanquished in all easiness the enemies like Cupid (the sexual urge) and the like that are hard to conquer fell when touched by that, tell me, how and by whom can that *kopa*, anger, be conquered?"

*ugrair ugrais tapobhiḥ śamadamanīyamair
dhāraṇādhyānayogair
yuktaś cāparameṣṭhye tribhuvanavibhave
charditānnāvabodhaḥ/
kandarpādīn amitrān api sahajatayā durjayān eva
jitvā
yena sprṣṭā nīpeuḥ kathaya katham asau kena kopo
vijeyah//⁹*

"*Kopa* is an effect of an evil planet called *Kāma*. It is the intoxication that goes with wine. It shakes the fortitude in a jiffy and confuses the mind. One loses sense of oneself. The body loses control. [*Kopa*] kills *dharma*. Under (its influence) one speaks the unspeakable words". (*Ādarśacarita*).

With perverseness due to anger the mind is not able to decide as to what one should do and what not: *nahi kopakaluṣitā vimṛśati matiḥ kartavyam akartavyam va*¹⁰.

One is advised not to get angry even when provoked. Even the resentment caused to one who can withstand the provocation would decimate the provocateur and take away from him his merit for himself:

*ākruśyamāṇo nākrośen manyur eva titikṣataḥ/
ākroṣṭāraṁ nirdahati sukr̥taṁ cāsya vindati //*¹¹

Between the one who performs a sacrifice every month without break (lit. with no fatigue) for a hundred years and the one who does not vent his anger against anybody, it is the latter who excels:

*yo yajed aparīśrānto māsi māsi śatam samāḥ /
na krudhyed yaś ca sarvasya taylor akrodhano 'dhikah//*¹²

One who holds back his anger and withstands digs at him (and) does not feel the heat even though in torment is definitely deserving of *Mokṣa* (salvation):

*yaḥ sandhārayate manyuṃ yo 'tivādāṃś titikṣate/
yaś ca tapto na tapati dṛḍham so 'rthasya bhājanam//*¹³

A person burnt with the fire of anger does not have peace from anywhere:

*koṇḍīdāhadagdhasya kvāpi śāntir na vidyate*¹⁴

When anger arises, it, like fire, first burns its base (the one from where it has arisen). It may burn the other one or may not:

*utpadyamāna eva prathamam dahaty eva svam āśrayam/
krodhaḥ kṛśānuvat paścād anyam dahati vā na vā//*¹⁵

With his discriminative faculty gone, the one blinded with rage is totally blind and not the one blind in eyes:

*krodhāndhaḥ paramāndha eva hatadhīr nāndho dṛṣāndho
janaḥ*¹⁶

There is another aspect to it which needs recount. It does not stay long with the self-controlled ones like drops of water on the blades of the plants of food grains:

*vaśīno ruṣo matiṣu nāsate ciraṃ jalavipruṣaś ca sasyasūciṣu*¹⁷

Blessed are those best of men, the great souls, who control through their discriminatory faculty the anger arisen like the blazing fire with water :

*dhanyās te puruṣaśreṣṭhā ye buddhyā kopam utthitam/
nirundhanti mahātmāno dīptam agnim ivāmbhasā.//*¹⁸

Krodha is bad in itself but that is not all. It is the source of many other evils. It has a full group of allies, called *gaṇas*. They are counted as eight in the *Manusmṛti*:

*paiśunyaṃ sāhasaṃ droha īrṣyāsūyārthadūṣaṇam/
vāgdaṇḍajam ca pūruṣyaṃ krodhajo 'pi gaṇo 'ṣṭakah//*¹⁹ 7.48

“Tail-bearing, violence, treachery, envy, slandering, (unjust) seizure of property, reviling and assault are the eightfold set (of vices) produced by wrath.”²⁰

Everything said and done, it is very difficult, if not impossible to control anger. Even Yudhiṣṭhira who, as per a popular legend, had his first lesson in controlling it from his teacher, could not do so when face to face with Arjuna who had come to him to enquire about his state having come to know the injuries and the insult he had suffered at the hands of Karna. Mistaking the glow on the face of the latter due to widespread destruction by him of the redoubtable Saṁśaptakas as due to his having killed Karna to avenge the insult to him, he showered praise on him. When told that he had come just to enquire about his well-being and that Karna was still alive he lost his temper and permitted himself hurling vituperative insults on him making him also lose his cool and think of beheading him, a situation that could have led to an unmitigated disaster.

Even the sages and seers who spent their time in penance and meditation could not withstand the rush of it. Some of them like Durvāsas earned infamy through their being short-tempered; *Durvāsā nāma sulabhakopo maharṣiḥ*. The anger of Paraśurāma, another sage, was so intense that he took the vow to cleanse the earth of the Kṣatriya race, an attempt that he repeated twenty-one times. That being the situation, how can one hope the ordinary mortals to shun it. That would be asking for the impossible. But then it has to be cultivated to save oneself from it, for it is self-destructive. Anger management is, therefore, a

desideratum. How it is to be achieved is a million dollar question.

A Brāhmaṇa once asked the Buddha, "Master, is there anything you would agree to kill?" The Buddha answered: "Yes, anger. Anger is the single enemy that the wise ones agree to kill". The Buddha's response impressed the Brāhmaṇa and he became a monk in his Saṅgha. When the Brāhmaṇa's cousin learnt that he had become monk, he cursed the Buddha to his face. The Buddha just smiled. The man became all the more incensed and asked, "Why don't you respond?" The Buddha replied, "If some one refuses a gift, it must be taken back by the one who offered it." Angry words and actions hurt, first of all, oneself.

After that the Buddha recited the verse:

*For those with no anger how can anger arise?
When you practice deep looking and master yourself,
You dwell in peace, freedom and safety.*

The one who offends another after being offended by him, harms himself and the other.

When you feel hurt, but do not hurt the other, you are truly victorious.

Both your practice and your victory benefit you. When you understand the roots of anger in yourself and in the other, your mind will enjoy true peace, joy and lightness. You become the doctor who heals himself and heals the other. If you do not understand, you will think not getting angry to be the act of a fool.

Just as with the Buddha so with Prophet Mohammad goes a story. He would pass by a house where an old woman would throw garbage at him. He would not care for it and move on. This practice continued for days together. Once when he passed by the house no garbage came hurtling towards him. It was the same the next day also. The Prophet thought that there was something wrong with the woman. On enquiry he came to know

that she was seriously ill. He went up to her, served her and brought her back to normalcy. The woman was ashamed at her conduct. She asked him as to how he could be so kind even when treated so badly. The Prophet said that she had been giving what she had and he was giving what he has.

"Those with no anger means people who have no seeds of anger in their store consciousness. We get angry, first of all, because of the seeds of anger we carry within, the seeds that may have been transmitted by our parents and by our society. Even a small irritation can bring that anger to surface. A person without seeds of anger can smile no matter what is said to him."

A way to overcome anger was suggested by a thinker called Atmamaya Raja and that is that whenever you get angry, before uttering a word, say to yourself, "I will get angry tomorrow". Postponing undesired things reduce their intensity and give one time to reflect on the situation. Swami Atmananda added to what Atmamaya Raja said. He said: "Humans have the freedom to break free of any conditioning and conversely create an entirely new one. So potent is our capacity of self-consciousness.

You will find negative and frustrated people all over. They make the innocent people the target of their anger and become self-centred and nagging.

Habitual complainers may turn out to be workaholics and achievers as they feel forced to prove to themselves that they are 'superior'; what others think of them is of no import. What will you like to be to others: pleasant, open and receptive to new ideas, one to whom others flock; or 'self-righteous', angry and absolutely non-attractive.

The significant issue is how to rise above the other person's bitterness and make sure that you do not get influenced because otherwise you will begin to resemble the other person. You will feel angry and frustrated. You cannot reform the other person, you can only reform or change yourself.

There is love—a powerful emotion that makes you transcend anger in your interaction with the bitter person. This may seem

difficult at first, but a start has to be made by refusing to be in the negative wavelength of the other person.

"Anger is just a thought wave which we identify and respond to. So if this weakening thought wave can be controlled and changed, the response also will be calm instead of an angry stance. "It is important that we connect to the inner-net and not just the internet. Go out and explore nature and do not lose the human touch."

As has been pointed out earlier in reference to old texts, anger is as destructive, if not more, than fire. When you get angry, certain glands in your body get activated. This leads to an outpouring of adrenaline and other stress hormones with noticeable physical consequences. Your face reddens, blood pressure increases, voice rises to a higher pitch and breath becomes faster and deeper, your heart beats faster and your arm and leg muscles tighten. Your body becomes tense. The cumulative effect is that anger increases risk of coronary and other life-threatening diseases, like strokes, ulcers and high blood pressure. Better then to overcome anger. Burn anger before it burns you.

When you are calm and happy, digestive processes in your body work normally. When angry, they go for a toss. The Upaniṣad has, therefore, rightly recommended, so do the medical practitioners, that one should partake of food in a happy frame of mind: *prasannamukho 'nnāni bhujijāta*. Avoid eating when angry or resentful. Anger affects the entire body; it is poison.

There are three ways to handle anger. Firstly, through expression. Psychiatrists say it is good to express anger for it brings relief, as you have spoken your mind. The relief, however, is temporary. Resentments build up again and you are ready for another spill out. Gradually anger becomes a habit and you its slave. Anger controls you, it is a terrible master. Secondly, through suppression but that is not the right way as it drives anger into the subconscious and continues to create havoc.

However, neither expression nor suppression is recommended, for, these do not help one overcome anger. So

the third way, that of forgiveness, patience and forbearance, works better. Forgive and be free! Every night, before you retire, replay the day's happenings. Were you cheated by some one? Did some one offend you, hurt you or treat you badly? Call out that person and say "I forgive you" and go to sleep peacefully.

It is pertinent here to recall an incident in the life of the great Prussian King Frederick the Second. One day, he found one of his servants taking a little snuff from his silver snuff-box.

"Do you like this snuff-box?", asked the king in his utter simplicity. The man caught in the act of stealing, felt embarrassed; he did not answer.

Once again, the king repeated the question: "Do you like the snuff box?"

The man looked up and said: "Yes, Sir it is indeed a beautiful snuff-box".

"Then" said the king, take it. For it is too small for the two of us."

A yet another episode also bears reproduction here. There was a monk who was bad-tempered. He lived in an Ashrama but found it difficult to get along with the Ashramites. He decided to leave and lead a secluded life in the forest. He thought that he would thus overcome anger. In the beginning he found peace and tranquillity within. He was happy.

One day he went to the river to fill a jug of water. As he placed the jug on the ground, it toppled over. He picked it up and filled it again. Again the jug toppled down. He repeated the process a number of times, until finally he lost his temper and smashed the jug to pieces. Then it was that he realized his mistake. "I left the Ashrama", he confessed to himself, "only to control my anger, but anger has followed me even here into the forest."

It is not individuals or situations that cause anger. It is your own reaction and response to individuals and situations that determines whether you will be angry or otherwise. Therefore, develop the will to control anger.

Whenever we think of flaws, anger is the last thing that comes to our mind; but it is a serious issue with every one. Every one feels that he/she has the right to be angry. It is very easy to listen to rules, focus on positive things but in reality when you are itching to reply back, when retort is struggling to come out of you, then it is very difficult to remember the rules. Most of us rationalize that it is the other person who is provoking us. We all seek refuge in saying that "I was not going to say anything, but he left with me no choice." We think ourselves to be rational while doing and saying the most irrational things.

I can control myself and decide whether to reply or remain silent. It is my prerogative but to exercise this control is the hardest thing. The sweet taste of victorious pride is hard to let go. The desire to avenge our wounded pride is irresistible and this is the very desire that creates friction between friends, destroys families and causes some people to commit unspeakable crimes. And all this while, the secret to avoid all this lies within our heart.

When one gets worked up, it is necessary for him to reason out and let the other person know his side of the story. One should try to shout less and listen more.

Most often than not, we regret our words whenever spoken in haste but this repentance comes very late. Sometimes we do not get the opportunity to apologize. If we can just listen to our inner voice, whenever we are angry, we will not just save ourselves from being hurt, we can save ourselves from the inferno of rage and destruction too.

Before the discussion on *akrodha*, the absence of anger even when there is reason for it—this is how it is explained by Kullūkabhṭṭa in the context of its mention in a verse in the *Manusmṛiti*: *krodhahetau saty api krodhānutpattiḥ* is brought to a close, it may be pertinent to mention that *krodha*, anger is one of the deterrents to good communication which is so essential to live amicably in society. A feeling of emptiness always follows

anger. Anger takes away all that one has within oneself and one is left vacuous and dissipate in its wake. Sometimes anger is sought to be justified as a means of self-defence. There is nothing farther from truth than this. Anger leads almost to madness. What defence can it hope to provide? In its grip one tends to lose one's moorings and gradually even memory. Things get so worse that one loses touch even with oneself. One forgets as to who he is. He behaves in a fashion that is uncharacteristic of him. A good example is road rage. The thinking at that time is simply clouded. One does not bother about the consequences of one's mad action/s. If only one were to control one's emotive reaction at a crucial moment, things would be different for one. But it is easier said than done. One has to cultivate strong will for it which, though difficult, is not an impossibility.

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Dūradarsītā

Farsightedness

It has been emphasized time and again in ancient literature that one should not look to one's immediate gain or loss and should cultivate a long range view: *dirgham paśyata*, and not a shortsighted one, *mā hrasvam*. While planning one's activities one is advised to provide for future contingencies right away and not wait to allow them to unfold themselves in their course in the hope that these would be taken care of at that time. The *Rāmāyaṇa* says that one who has his well-being at heart should provide for the future: *anāgatavidhānam tu kartavyam śubham icchatā*.¹ The *Mahābhārata* too endorses this view when it says:

*anāgatavidhātā ca pratyutpannamatiś ca yaḥ/
dvāṇ imau sukham edhete dirghasūtrī vinaśyati//*²

“One who provides for the future and one who is possessed of the presence of mind are comfortable in life; one who is given to procrastination comes to naught.”.

The idea is found even in the *Tantrapākhyāna* which reproduces the same stanza with a minor change in the fourth quadrant: *yadbhaviṣyo vinaśyati*,³ “one who thinks that whatever takes place in the future will be taken care of comes to naught.”

Bhīṣma in the *Mahābhārata* explains the above by referring to an anecdote. There were three types of fish in a pond, as described above, one believing in taking precautions before the event, the second who believed in applying the mind as the

event would unfold and the third, who would just not do anything and merrily gloss over. Once some fishermen out to catch fish started emptying the pond of its water. The one who was prone to look to the future, thought it wise to leave the pond immediately and shift to another one well in time before it could be difficult to do so. The second one did not do that. It remained in the pond with the thought that it would think of some means to make good its escape when something untoward were to take place. The third just dilated doing nothing. The first shifted to another pond even while the pond had enough water in it. The second persisted there till all its water had been drained and the fishermen were putting all the fish in their nets. It clung to the thread of the net from outside instead of going into it, thus acting as if it had been caught and got away from it when the other fish were being washed. The third one not doing anything just got into the net and perished.

Farsightedness is a rare quality which is generally inborn. The sages and the visionaries have it. They would just not be bound by the immediate present. They would foresee the coming events. Rāma while picking up fight with Khara in the forest who had dashed towards his hut along with his fourteen-thousand strong army bade Lakṣmaṇa to take resort along with Sītā to a mountain cave surrounded by trees and consequently difficult of access. Apprehending trouble, a wise person has to, if he wants his well-being, to take steps early enough for averting a possible untoward happening:

*anāgatavidhānam tu kartavyam śubham icchatā/
āpadam śaṅkamānena puruṣeṇa vipścītā/*⁴

Rāma was quick enough to foresee that with himself and Lakṣmaṇa engaging the demons in fight unescorted Sītā would be exposed to the risk of being put to harm even to the extent of being kidnapped. It was his foresight that made Lakṣmaṇa, according to some Rāmāyaṇa versions, draw a line outside his hut before repairing to his brother on hearing the false cries of

Mārīca which Sītā overstepped fearing for the wrath of an ascetic courting in the process all the troubles to herself and her spouse.

It was the farsightedness of Candragupta Maurya in the early ancient period in marrying the daughter of the Greek commander Seleucus thus turning a potential enemy into a matrimonial ally who, in alliance with the remnant Nanda loyalists could well have spelt trouble for him—a trait followed by Mughal rulers in the medieval period who wedded Hindu Rajput women, thus putting a seal on their loyalty which also secured them their kingdoms which they continued to rule in comparative peace.

Coming to the modern period, it was Pandit Nehru's farsightedness that laid the foundation of a modern industrialized India. His *mantra* of non-alignment even at the height of the cold war provided the breather to the country to build itself industrially. It was in Pandit Nehru's time that giant dams were built to harness water resources for energy and the giant steel mills came up. The booming economy of today owes much to the steps that the great visionary had initiated in his time. The same farsightedness, but in a different direction, was displayed by Pandit Nehru's contemporary Sardar Patel who set about integrating the five hundred and odd princely States with the Indian Union which had been given the three options, as per the terms of the Instrument of Accession devised by the British, to join India or Pakistan or to remain independent. Were the states to exercise the last two options, it would have meant endless trouble for the nascent State. A state, Junagarh, which chose the second option and another state, Hyderabad, which did the third one were chastised to merge in the Union.

The principle of secularism—that the state would not discriminate between its citizens on the basis of religion or caste—which Pandit Nehru so assiduously cultivated is also a standing monument of his farsightedness. The great visionary foresaw that were it not to have been followed India with its

varied religions and faiths would be torn apart, a tragedy beyond imagination.

Farsightedness also implies securing one's interest and going by one's impulses. It also implies judging the motives and intentions of the opposite party in spite of its seeming gushes of friendliness and bonhomie. And even if they were to be found to be genuine at a given time, to provide for antidotes, here and now, if they evaporate and take a hostile turn which could be, as indeed it is, a distinct possibility in near or distant future leading to the age-old formulation *viśvaste 'pi na viśvaset*, one should not trust even the trusted ones. Farsightedness also implies that one should keep one's sight high which is the key to success in life.

Foresight should be the quality of every planner, builder and architect. When the roads are laid, they are not laid to provide for flow of traffic obtaining at that time only but for the one that could build up after five to ten years. The same is the case with bridges, airports and other public utility services.

When the writer of these lines was at Puri the Shri Jagannath Sanskrit University had just come up. Its building plans were under way. Just then one of his friends from Germany happened to visit him with his wife and stayed with him for a couple of days. One day he started showing him and his wife the outline map of the buildings to come up in the University. When he pointed to the map of the proposed library building, the wife of the friend who happened to be the Chief Librarian of the State Library of Stuttgart, took up the map from him and after expert calculation pointed out that the library can accommodate only fifty thousand books or seventy-five thousand books by stretching the capacity to the maximum to his horror for that was nothing for a University library which has to grow and expand over the years and provision for which has to be made at the stage of the planning itself. The very next day the Chief Minister had called a meeting to discuss the University plans where the writer of these lines raised this point. At the pointed query of the Chief

Minister the Chief Architect of the State admitted that that was the position with the agitated Chief Minister throwing back the plan at him asking him to revise it to provide for accommodating at least half a million books. That was the foresight.

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Dr̥dhasaṅkalpa

Resoluteness

Resoluteness is the key to the achievement of any objective. When one makes up one's mind to do something, it is never possible to deflect him/her from his/her resolve. Kālidāsa has very expressively put it in the context of Menā, the mother of Pārvatī, failing to dissuade her from practising penance for obtaining Śiva as her husband: *ka īpsitārthasthīraniścayaṁ manaḥ payas ca nimnābhimukhaṁ pratīpayet*,¹ "who can deflect a mind resolutely fixed on a desired object, and water, flowing on a downward course".

But for this one has to have a strong heart—no wavering, once a decision is taken, no going back on it, whatever the inducements or impediments. The best examples of this is furnished in Indian literature by the young lad Naciketas who was offered a number of allurements by Yama (the God of Death) to whose house he had repaired due to an angry outburst of his father such as his being blessed with sons and grandsons with a life span of a hundred years, a number of animals, gold, horses, pretty damsels, singing and dancing who are not ordinarily accessible to mortals in exchange for desisting from putting the question: when a person dies, does he exist or does he not. Naciketas resolutely refused these allurements with the remark: let these carriages and singing and dancing be with you, *tavaiva vāhās tava nr̥tyagīte*.² He would settle for nothing short of answer to his question: *nānyaṁ tasmān naciketā vr̥ṇīte*,³

“Naciketas would ask for no other boon”. Yama (the God of Death) had to yield and explain to him the permanence of the soul, its continued existence even after the extinction of the body and clear his doubt and being instrumental thereby clear the doubt of millions who may be entertaining it.

In the case of Sāvitrī too it is the same Yama who has to relent in the face of her perseverance in chasing him and extracting from him one boon after another and trapping him in the cobweb of his own boon and forcing him to restore to life her deceased husband.

All the inventors and explorers had to face untold obstacles in the course of their inventions and explorations but they never gave up. It is their sheer persistence that paid ultimately. Those who studied the wild life or the marine life or explored marine archaeology, those who researched in plants and herbs moving about in thick forests infested with all sorts of wild beings exposed themselves to great dangers but achieved their goals through grit and determination. The same is also true of migrants and navigators out to explore new lands, the lands quite often uninhabited and, even if inhabited, inhabited by wild tribes who would be hostile to any newcomer.

India's literary archives throw up an impressive array of instances of success achieved through deep sense of commitment. Ekalavya, the Niṣāda boy achieved unmatched skill in archery. The image of Droṇa that he had fashioned in clay and had placed in front of him in his sessions of practice of archery might have provided him with spiritual strength but the will of achieving something unique was all his own. The plain fact is that even though he had mentally accepted Droṇa his teacher, he had no formal lessons from him. No actual training. It was the resoluteness with which he pursued his mission in learning archery and mastering it with intense practice that unnerved even Arjuna, the best of the direct pupils of Droṇa.

The other instance is that of Līlāvati, the daughter of the great mathematician and astronomer Bhāskarācārya. She had

lost her husband early enough in marriage. This had caused her immense grief. Totally shattered, she would be crying all the time. Coming to know of it Bhāskarācārya brought her to his house from that of her in-laws. There too she would be bewailing and bemoaning. One day Bhāskarācārya told her that if she would continue that way she would be wasting her life. She had to have some diversion. He asked her to learn arithmetic. She accepted his suggestion. The great teacher that he was, Bhāskarācārya started giving her lessons in Arithmetic. In course of time she developed keen interest in it. She began to solve many a problem of arithmetic herself. Not only that, she propounded many a theory of it. She helped her father in his researches. So impressed was he with her deep knowledge of the subject that he named his work after her. *Līlāvati* is one of the most prominent texts on Mathematics of ancient India. It is her grit and determination to master the discipline that immortalized her.

Any person who has even a modicum of achievement to his credit must have to have the quality of resoluteness, the *dr̥ḍhacittatā*. Though it may sound autobiographical and incongruous in the present write-up, the writer of these lines would like to say something of his early life. Till he had passed the Shastri examination, he had no knowledge of English, not even of English alphabet. From the Oriental College, Lahore he was straight admitted to the ninth class in the local D.A.V. High School. He started learning English then and with his firm resolve picked it up sufficiently enough to take the Matriculation examination through the medium of English within a period of just sixteen months and won Govt. scholarship. The same firm resolve also made him wade through some of the most abstruse of the grammatical texts while at Varanasi.

There would be cases when firm resolve would score over even super-intelligence. A reference to the story of Bopadeva is very pertinent here. He was not a very bright student, not grasping the lessons his teacher taught him repeatedly. One day

out of the Gurukula he saw some women drawing water from a well and placing their pitchers in the hollows near it. Asking them as to how the hollows have come up, he was told that it was because of the repeated placing of the pitchers at a particular spot. "If the inert earth can sink in by repeated placing on it of something, can the lessons not sink in me", argued he to himself. Retracing his steps he went back to his teacher and made a firm resolve to retain in memory what his teacher was teaching him. This helped him learn the lesson resulting in his turning into one of the great grammarians of his time.

A popular anecdote also illustrates the power of the strong will. A king had no child. He was all the time depressed with the thought that he has no successor who could inherit the kingdom from him. His minister advised him to consult the Rājaguru, the Royal preceptor for identifying a successor. The Rājaguru told him to arrange an exhibition where he could himself be present but in such a way that people may not be able to find him easily. The king arranged an exhibition in a sprawling ground. Stalls laden with ware of all kind were set up. It was announced that anybody can come to the exhibition and collect from stalls any thing of his or her choice and walk away without paying anything in the first hour of its opening. After that he or she will have to pay four times the price of the ware. Further, the king would also be there in the exhibition hidden somewhere. Any one discovering him would be entitled to inherit the kingdom. Huge crowds gathered in the exhibition ground. There was a scramble to carry as much freebies as possible. There was one young man among the crowds who unmindful of the goods on display was frantically searching for the king. His single-minded pursuit yielded result. He could trace the king hiding in a cave in a corner and as per the terms of the announcement was declared the successor.

Another instance of the strong will power is furnished by a Russian pilot Oschev. His aerobatic stunts were surprise of everybody. As ill luck would have it, one day the engine of his

plane developed a snag and hit a hillock. This led to Oschev suffering grievous injuries. . Both of his feet had to be amputated to save his life. His friends and kin were in great pain to see him in that state. One of his friends said to him, "Oschev, we will not be able to see you flying a plane from now on." Oschev was unmoved. "No, never. You will be able to see me flying the plane again," said he. His friend took his words as false consolation to himself. But that was not so. He got a pair of artificial feet and started walking with them. First it was with a stick, later even without it. To the doubting Thomases in his friendly circle he said that he was determined to fly a plane any time sooner. He was able to do that ultimately surprising everybody with his aerobatic feats as before.

History furnishes many more instances of success being achieved with unflagging determination. One such instance is that of Albert Einstein who, though he starting his life from very humble beginnings, made such discoveries as changed the course of scientific history.

Albert Einstein was born into a poor family in the nineteenth century. He started out with no means whatsoever living in destitution and misery. But from the very outset he was an ambitious person and blessed with sagacity—the determination to pursue his goal to the very end. This determination, *saṅkalpa*, became his greatest asset and finally he emerged as one of the greatest scientific minds of the world.

The resolve or the willpower has a magic of its own. No matter what one's condition, one can utilize the resources available in the worst condition and turn adversity into opportunity. A story being reproduced here can very well illustrate it. An old man lived in a village. He wanted to spade his potato garden, but it was very hard work. His only son, who would have helped him, was in prison. The old man wrote to him a letter and explained his situation.

"Dear son, I am feeling pretty bad because it looks like that I will not be able to plant my potato field this year. I hate to miss

doing this, because your mother always loved planting without fail. I am just getting too old to be digging up a garden plot. If you were here, all my troubles would have been over. You would have dug the plot if you were not in the prison". Shortly the old man received the following telegram from his son in the prison. "Dad, do not dig up the garden. That is where I have buried the guns." At 4 a.m. next day a dozen F.B.I. agents and local police officers showed up and dug up the entire garden without finding any gun. Confused, the old man wrote another note to his son, telling him what happened, and asked him what to do next. His son's reply was "Go ahead and plant your potatoes now. Dad, it is the best that I could do for you from here."

Moral of the story: No matter where you are in the world if you have decided to do something deep from your heart, you can do it. It is the thought that matters, not where you are. It is better to light a candle than to cause the darkness.

The well-known thinker Maulana Wahiduddin Khan in one of his write-ups published in the *Times of India* in its issue of 6.12.2012 recounted a similar episode that shows the power of resoluteness. Writes he, "Some time ago I spent a few days in Kigali, the capital city of Rwanda in central Africa. During this visit I happened to meet a Gujarati Indian, who was living in Kigali as an immigrant. He was running a cloth shop in the city.

One day I visited his shop and found that he was able to deal with his customers in fluent and understandable English. He seemed to have a good working knowledge of the language. One of his friends told me that there was an interesting story behind his English. When this Gujarati Indian first came to Kigali, and opened his shop, he knew no English. But a large number of his customers were English speaking, so he felt compelled to try to speak in English.

During the early days his English was far from good. One day some one said to him, "If you are not in a position to speak correct English, why do you try to speak it?" The shopkeeper

replied, "I speak incorrect English so that I may be able to speak correct English".

So it came about in two years' time he was able to deal with his customers in the English language. When I met him, he was quite fluent in English as a means of communication and for a shopkeeper that was good enough.

Therefore, "Where there is will there is a way.' If you have a strong enough will to achieve something, you will do so, sooner than later. Strong will itself is like successful schooling as you learn from experience, and for a sincere person, experience is a successful teacher."

Studies of human brain tell us that it contains numerous windows. Some are open and some are closed. It requires a compelling situation to open the closed windows of the mind. If one has a shocking experience and takes it seriously, that will automatically open those closed windows. This process sometimes brings about miracles: a person then can play a role that was unimaginable before that experience.

This principle can be applied to almost every situation, big or small. Any one can perform a miracle, the only condition being that he should have the capacity to turn any shocking moment to good account.

In Psychology the brainstorm theory explains such abnormal events. When there is a shocking experience, there is a storm in the human brain. This brainstorm activates dormant cells of the mind, and one becomes capable of doing what one could not have accomplished in a normal situation.

There are numerous examples like that of say, Bhimrao Ambedkar. "He was born into a poor 'untouchable' family. As a boy he found himself rejected in his own society. This sad experience was overwhelming, but he decided to overcome this situation. After much hard work, he successfully completed his education and finally emerged as a great mind in the drawing up of the Indian Constitution. After independence he was appointed the chairman of the drafting committee of the same.

What is imperative in such a situation is that one who faces such adversity should not become demoralized, but should learn from other people's behaviour towards him, so that he may unfold his own potential.

A strong will can reveal one's hidden potential".

Coping with a situation is not necessarily reactive, it is proactive too. We pick up the mantle thrown to us and practice patience, detachment, endurance. To overcome obstacles and difficulties we need to develop coping skills that encompass emotional, mental and spiritual needs.

The only difference between the wise and the foolish is that the wise learn to cope with reality and transform it and the foolish get swept away by the ups and downs of life.

There is a parable of a wise man in the gospels who built his house on rock. It withstood all the rains and storms. On the other hand the man who built his house on sand watched his house get destroyed in rain and storm. Hence we need to cultivate rock-like resilience and welcome attributes that will help us to cope.

Life is not always smooth. If it gives happiness, it gives a lot of unhappiness too. One needs a strong mind to face it. A weak mind that is unable to withstand suffering invites more suffering. What happened to Droṇācārya when he heard the news of the death of his son? He was so much attached to him that he gave up fighting and courted death.

History furnishes a very inspiring instance of resoluteness and the success attained thereby. A sports class was no. A frail girl got up from her seat and started asking questions about olympic record provoking her classmates to laughter. Even the teacher was not impressed with her queries, she being so weak in constitution as to not even get up straight, let alone playing a game. The depressed girl did not say any thing. She was almost in tears. The whole class continued making fun of her. The next day she was given a seat apart from others. She paused for a while, took up her crutches and said to her teacher, "Sir, please keep in mind, if one puts on a firm resolve and is determined

enough, success would surely attend one's efforts." Pointing to herself she said that she would sail through the air one day. The class continued mocking at her. The same girl started practising fast pacing. Gradually she started running slowly. After a while she picked up speed. With some more time, some more speed. She then started participating in small races. People were simply wonderstruck to see her running and that too very fast. In 1960 she participated in World Olympics and won Gold Medal. Her name was Wilma Rudolf.

Another instance that history furnishes is that of Abraham Lincoln. He came of a poor family. When he was young, he in spite of lack of resources, had great ambition to achieve something unique. He was a student of law. He came to know from somewhere that across a river flowing along his village a retired judge had his cottage. He had a good collection of books on law. He made up his mind to see the judge and get from him the books on loan. It was severe winter at that time. All by himself he took out a boat and tried to sail through the river. Midstream the boat struck a glacier and broke into two. Unmindful of it he swam across the river, icy water and the biting winds notwithstanding. The judge could simply not believe his eyes when he saw him (Abraham Lincoln) in front of him. He could mark the determination in his eyes. He allowed him to consult the law books if he were to stay with him for some days and help him in his domestic chores, his servant having been on leave. He stayed with the judge, brought firewood for him and did all that he asked. The rest of the time he would pore over the books. This so pleased the judge that he decided to give some of the books to him as present. That was Abraham Lincoln, the future President of the United States of America.

Anger, grief, jealousy, ego, fear and inferiority complex are some of the obstacles that render a person weak and take away from him his confidence. But there are people who maintain their equanimity even in the midst of crisis. Sardar Patel was once arguing a case in a court. Just at that time he received a

telegram conveying him the news of his wife's death. Unperturbed by this he continued with his arguments and won the case in favour of his client. After that he broke the news of his wife's death. This is the sign of a healthy mind. Such people never lose their self-confidence in the midst of crisis. One has to develop mental courage and strength and the problems that crop up every now and then would melt away. Swami Vivekanand said, "What makes you weep, my friend? In you is all the power." Given the will to surmount difficulties on one's journey on the planet one can face any problem and be a winner."

References

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Śrama

Exertion

The quality of *śrama*, exertion has won encomia from ancient thinkers since time immemorial. Declares the *Ṛgveda*: *na ṛte śrāntasya sakhyāya devāḥ*,¹ “gods do not make friends with one who does not exert.” According to the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* one who does not exert has no prosperity or has no sheen.² Exertion is the key to prosperity and well-being. One has to put in work, not only work but hard work, to earn these for oneself. The deer do not enter into the mouth of a lion by themselves if it were asleep, viz., when it does not put in any effort to catch them: *nahi suptasya sinīhasya praviśanti mukhe mṛgāḥ*.³ It was through exertion only that Lord Rāma even when forlorn and distraught could win allies in the forest who could fight the demon army.

When it is realized that exertion is going to yield fruit which is to stay for long (and is not transitory) it gives happiness to people:

*phalam āyatau suciravarti kalpayan
bhavati śramo 'pi hi sukhāya dehinām*⁴

This is what the age-old adage also puts succinctly: *kleśaḥ phalena hi punar navatām vidhatte*.⁵ A *subhāṣita* also echoes the same idea. The ultimate objective which a person achieves with varied efforts one likes just like the fruit of a tree tended by one's own hands by such efforts as the laying of a basin and watering:

*yat sādhitam gurutarair vividhaiḥ prayatnaiḥ
 tad rocate hi paramam puruṣasya lakṣyam/
 ādhārabandhajalasecanakaiḥ karābhyām
 samvardhitasya hi taroḥ prasavo 'tirucyaḥ//*

Here it must be clearly understood that exertion need not necessarily mean fatigue or exhaustion. If it is put in in achieving a particular objective, the motivational factor provides one the urge for it. It is more often than not contingent on the mental state, the feeling in a person. It is said that Mahatma Gandhi once noticing a young girl climbing a hill with an infant baby in her arms said: Oh, you are carrying so much burden. Pat came the remark from the girl: It is not burden. It is my brother. Well, if it is brother, it is no burden. If it is any other object, it is. That is how the sentiment colours everything.

"Each morning puts a man on trial and each evening passes judgment", says Roy L. Smith. How true! How many of us are consciously aware of this 'test' of life? For those who are not aware of this truth, there is nothing but problems galore. A whole life goes waste without even knowing that it has gone.

As day breaks, one is exposed to the realities of life. If one faces them and overcomes them, by meticulous plan and hard work, one sees a day gone beautifully and rewardingly. On the other hand, if one takes it casually and lets the day go by 'unnoticed', 'the evening judgment' cannot be in one's favour.

Exert one should but should not for the sake of it. Futile exertion has got to be avoided. There is no point in indulging in wild goose chase. That simply would mean frustration. One should examine the pros and cons of everything before embarking on any venture. Learning of words is an effort wasted if one leaves out the context in which they occur. What has a person with a shaven head to do with the stale flowers were he to find them:

*sandarbhāśaktihīnānām śabdābhyāso vṛthā śramah/
 mugdhāni labdhvā puṣpāni muṇḍitāḥ kiṁ kariṣyati//*

If the idea is to put in exertion for achieving an objective, one should ensure that that exertion is put in systematically and not haphazardly. Equally necessary for achievement of the objective is consistency in exertion. One does not have to stop it midway out of fatigue or exhaustion:

*yo yam arthaṃ prārthayate tadarthaṃ ceṣṭate kramāt/
so' 'vaśyaṃ tad avāpnoti na cec chrānto nivartate//*

One should carry the exertion to its logical conclusion. When major part of the exertion had been put in, one should not shy away from the little remaining part of it to ensure success of it, just as, says Bhāsa: *samūlaṃ vṛkṣaṃ utpātya śākhāś chettuṃ kutah śramaḥ*.

In the context of exertion it may well be noticed that it can broadly be divided into two, physical and intellectual, though in some cases both may overlap. Hewing of wood, cutting of iron and carrying of load and such other activities may require more of physical exertion while teaching, scientific research, planning, art and such other activities may require more of intellectual exertion. The explorations and the inventions may require both of them more or less on an even keel.

Finally, exertion does not exist in abstraction. It is coupled with a cause. Here a crucial point comes in: One would do well to direct one's exertion to a right cause. That would be good for oneself and for the society. The reverse of it would harm both. A thief, a robber, a terrorist also exert but their exertion is directed in the wrong direction. One has to use one's discretion to give the exertion right orientation.

References

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4. *Sūktimuktāvali*, 16
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Śaurya, Parākrama

Bravery, Valour

Śaurya is generally rendered as bravery, prowess, valour. It is explained in old Sanskrit works in various ways. According to the *Sāhityadarpaṇa* it is what can be called persistent aggressiveness in starting a venture: *kāryārambheṣu saṁrambhaḥ stheyān utsāha ucyate*.¹ According to the *Rasagaṅgādhara* it is the feeling of elevation (getting worked up) by the thought of valour of some one else or charity etc.: *paraparākramadānādismṛtjanmā aunnatyākhyā utśahaḥ*.

One must have got to be endowed with valour to be able to achieve victory which does not come without it: *na śauryeṇa vinā jayah*. There is nothing superior to it, says the *Śukranīti* in the three worlds: *nahi śauryāt param kiñcit triṣu lokeṣu vidyate*.² One cannot achieve victory without *śaurya*.

References

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Kṣamā

Forgiveness

Formed from the root *kṣam* 'to endure', *kṣamūṣ sahaṇe*, *kṣamā* means literally endurance. From endurance to forgiveness is not a far cry. The *Mahābhārata* connects this endurance with *dvandvas*, the opposite situations, *kṣamā dvandvasahiṣṇutvam*,¹ *kṣamā* is endurance of the opposite situations. That can be taken to be its definition. Endurance has to be taken here in the sense of equanimity. To maintain one's cool even in adverse situations is what *kṣamā* is. Not reacting to abuse or hurt or harm caused by some one and pay him back in the same coin or in other words tit for tat even if one is in a position to do so is pardon or forgiveness. Ordinary beings would fall prey to it. It is very difficult not to retaliate. That requires all the moral courage. One who has it distinguishes himself from others. Forgiveness or pardon which means not hitting back in spite of the capacity to do so is a feather in his cap : *śaktānāṃ bhūṣaṇaṃ kṣamā*.² For those who are weak, it is a quality, *kṣamā guṇo hy aśaktānāṃ*.³ This quality allows them to hide their weakness. *Kṣamā* is a *mantra* by which one can win over the world, *kṣamā vaśīkṛtir loke*.⁴ There is nothing that it cannot accomplish, *kṣamayā kiṃ na sādhyate*.

After the *Mahābhārata* the most cogent and easy definition of *kṣamā* is furnished by the Jain text the *Tattvārthasāra*

*krodhotpattinimittānāṃ atyantam̐ sati sambhave/
ākrośatādanādīnāṃ akāluṣyoparamaḥ kṣamā //*⁵

“The total absence of the possible reviling and beating that owe themselves to rise of anger is what *kṣamā* or forgiveness is. Another Jain text the *Sarvārthasiddhi* also defines *kṣamā* but its definition is limited in its compass to mendicants. *Kṣamā*, it says, is the non-appearance of foulness (in the mind) even when a mendicant going to houses of others for food for subsistence is subjected by the wicked to revile, ridicule, insult, beating and physical harm : *śarīrasthitihetumārgaṇārthaṃ parakulāny upagacchato bhikṣor duṣṭajanākrośaprahśanāvajñānatāḍana-śarīravayāpādanādīnāṃ sannidhāne kālasyānutpattiḥ kṣamā*.⁶

The *Bhaviṣya-purāṇa* defines it as the absence of anger and unhappiness caused by pain in speech, mind and body :

*vācā manasi kāye ca duḥkhenotpāditena ca/
na kupyati na cāprītiḥ sā kṣamā parikīrtitā//*

The definition of it as per the *Brahmaṇḍa-purāṇa* is

*ākruṣṭo nihato vā 'pi nākrośed yo na hanti ca/
vānmanahkarmabhir vetti titikṣaiṣā kṣamā smṛta//*⁸

“Not reviling or hitting either through words, thoughts or deeds even when reviled or hit is endurance and that is what *kṣamā*, forgiveness is.”

According to the *Bṛhannāradiya-purāṇa* there is no better fame than *kṣamā* : *nāsti kṣamāsamā khyātiḥ*.⁹

According to the *Skanda-purāṇa* “anger leads to sin, and kindness to happiness. One who controls the rising temper with forgiveness gets full happiness both in this and the other world. Men endowed with forgiveness are blessed with the best fortune”:

*krodhena pātakam bhūyād dayayā prāpyate sukham/
yaḥ samutpatitam krodham kṣamayaiva nirasyati//
iha loke paratrāsāv atyantam sukham aśnute/
kṣamāyuktā hi puruṣā labhante śreya uttamam//*¹⁰

The *Narābharaṇa* while recounting the superiority of one quality over the other puts *kṣamā* at the highest pedestal.

According to it handsomeness is the ornament of man, merit is the ornament of handsomeness, knowledge is the ornament of merit, forgiveness is the ornament of knowledge:

*narasyābharanam rūpam rūpasyābharanam guṇaḥ/
guṇasyābharanam jñānam jñānasyābharanam kṣamā//*¹¹

Kṣamā or forgiveness could have different motives. It could be out of fear from one who is superior to him (financially or physically or by virtue of authority). One may forgive one who is equal to him out of fear of public censure. One who pardons him who is inferior to him, he will have to be taken to be of the type of a great sage:

*śreṣṭham tu bhayāt kṣamate samam tu lokāpavādabhayāt/
hīnam yas tu kṣamate sa maharṣisamo naro jñeyah//*¹²

Kṣamā, forgiveness has won fulsome praise from masters of old in India. It is said to be at the root of all austerities: *kṣamā hi mūlam sarvatapasām*. The Vālmīki-Rāmāyaṇa goes out full throat to declare it as charity, truth, sacrifice, fame, righteousness and the support for the whole world:

*kṣamā dānam kṣamā satyam kṣamā yajñas ca putrikāḥ/
kṣamā yaśaḥ kṣamā dharmah kṣamayādhiṣṭhitam jagat//*¹³

So does the Mahābhārata. It calls it truth, charity, righteousness, austerity and says that for those who forgive exists this world as well the other one :

*kṣamā satyam kṣamā dānam kṣamā dharmah kṣamā tapaḥ/
kṣamāvatām ayam lokah paralokah kṣamāvatām//*¹⁴

Going further it says that it (kṣamā) is fame, charity, sacrifice, self-control, non-violence, righteousness, control over the senses and compassion:

*kṣamā yaśaḥ kṣamā dānam kṣamā yajñah kṣamā damah/
kṣamā 'himsā kṣamā dharmah kṣamā cendriyanigrahaḥ/
kṣamā dayā kṣamā yajñah*¹⁵

Like the *Rāmāyaṇa* it also proclaims it to be the support of the world: *kṣamayedam/ kṣamayaiva dhṛtam jagat*,¹⁶ It says that if there were no beings among men as forgiving as is the earth, the people will have no alliance. Conflict has anger at its root:

*yadi na syur manuṣyeṣu kṣamiṇaḥ pṛthivīsamāḥ/
na syat sandhir manuṣyāṇāṃ krodhamūlo hi vighrahaḥ*//¹⁷

The forgiving one attains heaven, fame and salvation. That is why he is considered the best :

*kṣamāvān prāpnuyāt svargaṃ kṣamāvān āpnuyad yaśaḥ/
kṣamāvān prāpnuyāt mokṣaṃ tasmāt sādhuḥ sa ucyate*//¹⁸

Not only that. He is a *tīrtha*, the holiness incarnate since he forgives irrespective of his being honoured or insulted, respected or humiliated, abused or threatened :

*mānito 'mānito vā pi pūjito 'pūjito 'pi vā/
ākruṣṭas tarjito vā 'pi kṣamāvāns tīrtham ucyate*//¹⁹

The *Mahābhārata* does not stop even at that. It raises him to the height of Brhman : *yadā hi kṣamate sarvān brahma sampadyate tadā*.

It requires all the moral courage to pardon a person who has caused harm or hurt. That is why a forgiving person is considered stronger than an ordinary person. He has something extraordinary about him that distinguishes him from others.

Sītā and Rāma are the two extraordinary characters in Indian lore. They are not extraordinary because of their qualities of bravery, filial devotion, steadfastness and truthfulness but also because of their quality of forgiveness. When Hanumat comes to Sītā at the behest of Rāma to convey her the news of his wellbeing and that of Lakṣmaṇa and his allies and the killing of Rāvaṇa, he seeks her permission, *yadi tvam anumanyase*,²⁰ to kill the demonesses, *hantum icchāmi*, who had threatened her earlier, *yābhis tvam tarjitā purā*. She does not approve of it and offers to forgive them, *dāsīnām rāvaṇasyāham mārṣayamīha*

durbalā.²¹ She takes pity on them, *dīnavatsalā*. They were just obeying the royal orders, *rājasamśrayavaśyānām kurvatinām parājñayā*.²² For all her miseries she blames her adverse fate, *bhāgyavaiṣamyadoṣeṇa*.²³ She then proceeds to quote a string of verses—she calls this *śloka*—uttered by a boar to a tiger as related in a Purāṇa which is pregnant with religious import. No one takes upon himself the iniquity of perpetrator of vicious deeds. So it behoves the pious with excellent character to observe the rules of (piety). It is proper to show compassion even to those who perpetrate crimes and are worthy of being slain. Who is there who does not commit an offence? It is not proper to act cruelly even against them who are cruel, who are sinners, who commit offences and who take delight in killing men. That is *Sītā*, the forgiveness incarnate!

Just as *Sītā*, so is *Rāma*. After the bitterly contested fight with *Rāvaṇa* where he had felled him, he asks the latter's brother to perform his last rites, *kriyatām asya saṁskārah*.²⁴ He does not stop at that. He goes to the extent of saying that he is as dear to him as he is dear to *Vibhīṣaṇa*. The hostilities end with death, says he, *maraṇāntāni vairāṇi*. After the objective (of taking revenge for the wicked deed of abduction of *Sītā*), *nirvṛttāṁ naḥ prayojanam*, there is no rancour. Even the deadliest of the enemy becomes the darling whose myriad qualities he is not chary of recounting.

Nobody can say that he has not been wronged by somebody at some point in life. Is it necessary to carry grudge against him all our life? If we do so, we not only allow the other person to hurt us, but also let him control our life each moment. Revenge and turmoil eat into our vitals and engulf our life.

"We need to accept our own imperfections and try to forgive others for the wrong done by them in order to ensure our psychological and spiritual well-being.

We cannot see our own faults. So when others point them out we should pay attention and be grateful. And we should not be too eager to see the weaknesses in others. The Bible says :

“Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye.”

At times people criticize us out of jealousy or other negative emotions. If we pay heed to them, our self-esteem will be lowered and our resolve to continue life's struggle will be weakened. If we have an ailment or a psychological problem, we should accept our imperfection and seek medical opinion rather than denying the problem.

We should ignore the wrong done by our family members and colleagues, and not be too eager to pass judgment. Perhaps we did not understand them or they did not understand us. If a family member has a short temper, we can stay silent when he/she speaks angrily. Later we may be able to realize the strengths of his/her character.

Perhaps we can see the beauty of forgiveness in what Dr. Janatte Rainwater, clinical psychologist, and writer says : “Forgiveness is not an admission that a person was in what she did, but it is a statement that you understand the frailty of the person who injured you. And to perceive that you could have been capable of the same action.”

The most creative power given to human beings is to heal the wounds of the past, the power to forgive. Forgiveness is a gift that God has endowed us with for healing ourselves. It aligns with the cosmic scheme through which we learn to accept the occurrence of events in our lives. Forgiving is the essence of spirituality because it liberates us from our suffering.

Guru Granth, the holy scripture of Sikhism is full of verses that emphasize the need to forgive. “Bure da bhalā manā, gussā man na vasā”, be graceful to the one who is bad to you, do not allow anger to take root in your mind”.

We sometimes think that forgiveness is an excuse for escapism, inaction or cowardice and only those who cannot fight forgive. That is not so. Forgiveness does not turn one into a coward. According to the Bible it is a sign of power.

Forgiving does not require us to reunite with the person who

broke our trust, nor does it mean that we accept the person's behaviour. It only means that we erase the "hate" within ourselves and stop living a life of torment and pain. Forgiveness heals the past releasing ill-will against the person while not forgetting the pain that guides our future actions.

The first step to forgiveness is recognizing that by holding on to our grudges to make the other person unhappy we are actually making our own selves unhappy.

The truth is that attachment to the hurtful past does not harm the other person but negatively impacts our emotional well-being. Martin Luther had said "forgiveness is pure happiness."

Lord Buddha had said that "there is no revenge as complete as forgiveness". This is not just an ideal maxim. This is the only way to retain one's peace. The habit of nurturing grievances is highly injurious to one's health.

Forgiveness is a gift of God. This arises from the core of the heart. By forgiving the poison of revenge dries up. The forgiver becomes the abode of love, happiness, humility and contentment.

The words of Jesus from Mark II.25 strike one like a beacon of light. "Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against any one so that God may also forgive you for your trespasses". Also, "if you cannot forgive, you cannot be forgiven; yet the wrong that you experienced is so hurtful, there seems to be no way to let it go."

It is the quality of forgiveness that it does not allow you to look back at revenge. The two cannot co-exist. If we sow the seeds of love, we will have a tree of love with abundance of flowers of compassion.

If out of fear and revenge, we sow thorny bushes, we should never hope to pluck bundles of grapes from there. In the same way we cannot hope to create woolen or silken cloth out of rayon.

To forgive and to forget is the heritage of saints and of those who follow them. Ego is the hindrance in the way of forgiveness. The fire of ego burns the egotist.

The man with the quality of forgiveness never says that he is good, because those who think of themselves as good, goodness never draws near them. The man who forgives and forgets is a strong man.

The span of human life is so short that one cannot afford to waste his time in remembering what wrong/s the other person has done him. What he needs is to move on.

Just as there are two sides to a coin, there are two sides of forgiveness too. There is possibility of its being mistaken by the offending party as a sign of weakness. Our ancient forbears had fairly early recognized the frailty of it. Forgiving occasionally could go well but not always, *na nityam śreyasī kṣamā*,²⁵ as says the *Mahābhārata*. Prithviraj Chauhan had forgiven Mohammad Ghorī twenty one times but that did not change Ghorī's heart. When the twenty second time he got hold of Prithviraj he had his eyes gorged out. Forgiveness has to be applied selectively. That is the practical side of life. He who goes on forgiving, meets with many a pitfall. He suffers insult at the hands of his servants, enemies and those who are indifferent to him. The other people in sheer contempt would eye even his wife while she not knowing what to do would act as she would please:

*athāsya dārān icchanti paribhūya kṣamāvataḥ/
dārās cāsya pravartante yathākāmam acetasaḥ/*²⁶

By forgiving one may bring peace to oneself. But if one thinks that one can bring change of heart in his opponent by his act of forgiveness, one may be living in fool's paradise. This may happen one in a million. Misconstrued as a sign of weakness, it may incite the wicked person to commit further crimes. Pardon a terrorist, free him from jail and he will indulge in more heinous crimes. Forgiveness as a means of reform can succeed only with those whose conscience is not entirely deadened. To others it may provide a handle for further acts of omission and commission. It is bound to fail as a matter of State policy.

In the ultimate analysis forgiveness has to be tempered with strength. It has to grow out of it making the offenders realize that with pardon they cannot get away with all their nefarious activities.

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7. 1.2.159
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9. 2.32
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Viveka

Discrimination

Human values can be categorized into physical, mental, intellectual and spiritual. Among intellectual ones figures discrimination, *viveka*, the instinct which distinguishes between good and bad, desirable and undesirable, useful and useless, fruitful and unfruitful. Discrimination has to be exercised at all times and in all walks of life. Laxity in this is the root of all troubles: *avivekaḥ paramāpadāṁ padam*,¹ as Draupadī advises Yudhiṣṭhira in the forest according to the *Kirātārjunīya* of Bhāravi, pointing out *inter alia* that one who plans one's moves thoughtfully, *vimṛśyakāriṇam*² prosperity in her greed for qualities chooses for herself of her own will: *vrnate hi...guṇalubdhāḥ svayam eva sampadaḥ*.³ It is not enough to be merely endowed with the instinct of discrimination, one should have the knack of applying it at the right time and on the right occasion, to achieve the intended objective. One has, therefore, the capability to apply one's mind in the right direction without allowing it to be deflected by passion or prejudice. A judicious mix of reasoning and analysing the pros and cons of every situation, is what is called for to achieve success and to avert disaster. Even the Lord lays emphasis on this. After having delivered the lengthy sermon to Arjuna he says: *vimṛśyaitad aśeṣeṇa yathecchasi tathā kuru*,⁴ you think over it in full and then do as you please.

The Lord is generous enough here to say that Arjuna has to exercise his own judgement. He has not to accept since He, the

Lord, has said it. He has to ruminate over it, to mull over it and if he finds it acceptable, then only he should accept it. That should be the approach of every one of us. We should not go by what others say. We should go deep into every matter to obviate the possibility of any ulterior motive in the other person's advice, however sound and reasonable it may appear at the first sight. It is here that the faculty of discrimination comes in. A wise man, a good man, may not find it difficult. When assailed by doubt, it is his own discriminating mind that will tell him what to do, that will be the final and ultimate authority for him and none else:

*satām hi sandehapadeṣu vastuṣu pramāṇam
antaḥkaraṇapravṛttayaḥ⁵*

Rāma in the *Rāmāyaṇa* exercised this discriminating faculty thus saving for himself situations which otherwise would have been unmitigated disasters. Bharata's coming to Citrakūṭa along with the Ayodhyā citizenry to persuade Rāma to return, Lakṣmaṇa perceived as motivated by the desire to eliminate Rāma to secure the kingdom for himself after having got on the throne. Rāma did not perceive it that way. He told Lakṣmaṇa who proposed doing away with Bharata in his blinding rage that Bharata would not have come to kill him; it was unthinkable that a brother would kill a brother as it was for the sons to kill the father. It is the equanimity of Rāma that did not allow him to jump to a conclusion at Lakṣmaṇa's report at Bharata's advent with the army that saved the situation from taking an ugly turn that would have led to a terrible disaster. The same kind of exercise of judgement on his part is noticeable in turning his back at the almost unanimous advice of his brother and allies with the sole exception of Hanumat not to admit Vibhīṣaṇa into his fold, he having come from the enemy's side. Sure of his strength, he did not allow the opportunity to slip from his hands. He anointed him as the Laṅkā king in exile and made him into one of his staunchest allies which stood him in good stead in his battle with Rāvaṇa.

While Rāma exercised his faculty of discrimination by and large, his consort Sītā did not do so in the most challenging situation that presented itself before her which changed the course of her life, landing her in all kinds of troubles and tribulations.

When Mārīca pierced by the arrow of Rāma cried aloud in agony imitating the latter's voice, O Rāma, O Lakṣmaṇa, in his nefarious design of misleading Sītā in dispatching Lakṣmaṇa assigned the duty of guarding her post haste to rescue Rāma in supposed distress, she allowed the emotion to overpower the finer sense. She just fell into the trap. She not only disregarded Lakṣmaṇa's advice, she even charged him with malicious intent or acting as a spy of Bharata on the look out for the right opportunity to strike, prodding him thus to fend for herself in a huff, an injudicious act on his part for which he was rightly castigated by Rāma. No amount of pleading of Lakṣmaṇa with her could cut ice with her. With Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa both away from the hut, she was an easy prey for Rāvaṇa with what followed next being an all too familiar a story. The same kind of injudiciousness she had shown earlier when she fell in for the golden deer frolicking in front of her hut much against the protestations of her husband that it could be a trick, *māyā*, of the demons, they being experts in it, an animal made of gold not having been seen or heard of earlier.

Her stubbornness in having it for her as a pet to be taken to Ayodhyā at the end of the period of exile to be shown to the queen mothers as a souvenir proved to be the source of all the attendant troubles, a truly *paramāpadāṁ padam*.

Rightly is it therefore said that a wise man should carefully weigh the outcome of his actions, good or bad.

The actions done in a huff result in the heart-burn as (painful) as the piercing of a dart till lasts the adversity:

*guṇavad aguṇavad vā kurvatā kāryajātam
pariṇatir avadhāryā yatnataḥ paṇḍitena/*

*atirabhasakṛtānām karmanām ā vipatter
bhavati hṛdayadāhī śalyatulyo vipākaḥ//⁶*

The above proves true not only in the case of Sītā but also of Draupadī. In the Svayaṁvara ceremony she permitted herself the thoughtless remark that she had no mind to marry the son of a charioteer which had cut Karṇa, seeking her hand, to the quick and had turned him her implacable foe.

The Nīti texts are right in laying therefore that one who cannot weigh the pros and cons of things, the result of one's initiatives and what harm they could cause is said to be naïve indeed :

*gurulāghavam arthānām ārambhe karmanām phalam/
doṣam yo na vijānāti sa bāla iti hocyate//⁷*

Further, one who does not care for the outcome and just rushes into doing a thing, repents when he has to reap the fruit like one who tends the Kimśuka tree (which bears no fruit):

*avijñāya phalaṁ yo hi karma tv evānudhāvati/
sa śocet phalavelāyām yathā kimśukasevakah//⁸*

For exercise of proper discrimination the prerequisite is that the mind should be clear, as says the *Kāmandakiyanītisāraḥ*: *buddhyā prasannayā*.⁹ It is only when it is clouded by anger or prejudice or envy or enmity or just plain addiction that one loses the right path and courts hardship. The example of the last one is Yudhiṣṭhira, the wisest of the wise of the Pāṇḍavas who through his addiction to the game of dice staked not only his brothers, not only his wife but also his own self. Even when given a reprieve by Dhṛtarāṣṭra for all his losses, he again took to it courting in the process all misery not only for himself but also for all his brothers and wife who was sought to be stripped in full view of the Kaurava Court. Had he just paused for a moment and allowed his good sense to prevail, he would have saved everybody the humiliation. In one instance this wisest of the wise, an embodiment of equanimity otherwise, lost his cool

and occasioned a situation which could have led to the complete wiping out of the Pāṇḍavas.* It was Kṛṣṇa's *viveka* that saved the situation for them. But for his empirical wisdom Duryodhana in the *Mahābhārata* battle would have laughed his way to victory. -----

The above is an example of anger and excitement clouding the vision. And were once one to lose it, one would go on slipping and slipping in every way:

*vivekabhraṣṭānām bhavati vinipātaḥ śatamukhaḥ*¹⁰

It is necessary, therefore, that when one speaks, one should weigh one's words carefully and not say something without proper thought which would lead to bad result even after a long time:

*sucintya cōktaṁ suvicārya yat kṛtaṁ
sudīrghakāle 'pi na yāti vikriyām*¹¹

It is nice to say that one should not jump to a conclusion. One should spare a few moments to mull over a thing, to deliberate upon its various aspects and then arrive at a decision. It happens that when passion subsides clear thinking emerges. One then repents over what one has done or was about to do. A little time spared for proper deliberation, and there may be no repentance.

It also is nice to say that one should discuss things with others before forming one's own opinion, one should not deliberate on things all by oneself : *naikaś cārthān vicintayet*. Sharing of one's initiatives with others may open up one to other facets of a thing which may not have crossed one's mind. It is equally necessary also that one should not surrender one's judgement to others and be always guided by them who may not always be motivated by the best of considerations. Rightly is it said: *mūḍhaḥ parapratyayaneyabuddhiḥ*.¹² The wise discriminate

* For detail of the situation see pp. 36-37

between different viewpoints and accept one out of them after proper scrutiny, *santaḥ parīkṣyānyatarad bhajante*, “sound critics, after examination, choose one or the other.” The blockhead must have his judgement guided by the views which according to Kṣīrasvāmin are of others.

Viveka, therefore, should be the basis of all our action. Amara explains it as *prthagātmatā*¹² which according to Kṣīrasvāmin is ‘to distinguish between Prakṛti and Puruṣa’ or according to others ‘the different facets of the objects’, *bhāvānām prthaksvarūpatvam*. Dharaṇi has the same interpretation as Amara, the difference being only in expression. According to him it is *prthagbhāva*, differentiation, sifting, sifting through the mind and the intellect as Manu metaphorically puts:

*satyapūtām vaded vācam manahpūtām samācare*¹³

“One should utter speech purified by truth and follow a conduct purified by mind.”

The etymology of the word also suggests this very meaning of *prthagbhāva*. The word is formed from √vic in the sense of *prthagbhāva* with the preposition *vi*. *Viveka* would, therefore, mean *viśeṣeṇa vekah*, the careful discrimination, the faculty that clearly distinguishes between good and bad, vice and virtue, desirable and undesirable, acceptable and unacceptable, worth doing or not, in short, the critical and analytical approach. It is this approach which the *sāstras* enjoin. Caraka declares: *parīkṣyakāriṇo hi kuśalā bhavanti*,¹⁴ those who act on examination acquire skill. This he was saying with reference to patients. They are first to be examined. The physician would not be true to his patient if he were not to have examined him: *nāparīkṣitam abhiniviśeta. samyakprayoganimitā hi sarvakarmaṇām siddhir iṣṭā vyāpac cāsamyakprayoganimitā*.

What Caraka has said is not only true with regard to a physician only but to all others. Every one of the individuals has to be *parīkṣyakārin*. Only then can he have the *siddhi*, success. It is this *parīkṣyakāritā*, doing things by carefully examining

them which *viveka* is. It is this which Kālidāsa emphasizes, in the context of Śakuntalā's repudiation by Duṣyanta, through Śarṅgarava who had accompanied her to his court for her falling in love in secret with a stranger:

*ataḥ parīkṣya kartavyam viśeṣāt saṅgatam rahaḥ/
ajñātaḥṛdayeśv evaṁ vairībhavati sauḥṛdam//*¹⁵

"Thus does a rash deed done on one's own burn: *ittham ātmakṛtaṁ cāpalam dahati*.¹⁶ "Therefore one should form union, particularly with a stranger and that too in private after careful examination. Friendship turns into enmity in those whose hearts are unknown (to each other)."

Kālidāsa's advice is as true and useful for his time as it is so for our time. If only the youngsters of today were to pay heed to it, and not fall headlong in love without knowledge of their guardians or against their wishes, much of the misery they face later they may be able to avoid.

Viveka requires a clear mind, the capacity to sift the chaff from the grain, to go deeper into every aspect of a thing and then take decision. The writer of these lines is reminded here of a story that he had read once. The story titled 'Five grains of Rice' runs as follows :There was a rich trader of the name of Dhanya in Rājagṛha. He had four daughters-in-law, Ujjhikā, Bhogavatī, Rakṣikā and Rohiṇī. Once it came to his mind that he should teach his family such a lesson as would stand it in good stead should something untoward were to happen to him. He arranged a feast to which he invited all his kith and kin. After everybody had had meals he called out to all of his four daughters-in law and to each one of them he gave five grains of rice asking them to take care of them and return them to him when asked for. The eldest one just threw them away with the thought that her father-in-law had a rich storehouse of grains and that she could just pick up the five grains from it were he to ask for them back. The second one also had a similar thought with this difference that she just munched them away. The third one made a packet of

Paropakāra

Doing Good to Others

In the human existence the best situation is when one has not to live only for oneself, that being just an animal instinct. A human being has to outgrow himself to reach out to others, to be of any service to them, to help them, should they require it, to provide succour to them. That is as it should be. That will elevate him mentally and spiritually by opening him up to the wider world which he would then come to look upon as an extension of himself. That will impart to him the feeling that his begetting the birth is of some worth: *parahitasampādanam ca janmaphalam*¹. This is the real goodness that comes to the fore among the noble people of their own volition, *santaḥ svayam parahite vihitābhiyogāḥ*². That is the barometer of goodness. It is that which does not make good people insolent in prosperity: *anuddhatāḥ satpuruṣāḥ, samṛddhibhiḥ*. To do good to others becomes the very part of their being: *svabhāva evaiṣa paropakāriṇām*³.

If a person is learned, his learning should be such as to be useful to others: *sā vaiduṣī phalam yasyā na paropakṛteḥ param*⁴. This is easily noticeable in the way of the scientific and technological discoveries. The medical researchers who toil day in and day out in inventing new drugs to fight diseases or to relieve distress or pain or make these bearable are not doing so just for themselves. They toil for the good of humanity at large. That is true of scientists as well who devote long hours in their

*tat prāptāv ayam abhyupāya iti ca prajñānusaṁśīlanād
antastoṣavikāśivaktrakamalaḥ so 'yam vivekaḥ sudhīḥ*//²²

“This world resembling the flash of lightning is in the jaws of death. It is only Brahman which has the form of truth, knowledge and happiness and is pure and eternal. It is only this wise *viveka*, discrimination with its lotus-like face blooming with the inner joy that is the means, through knowledge and pursuit, for its realization.”

Viveka is good for the worldly life saving a being from many an awkward situation. It is for the being the means for the realization of the Supreme Reality.

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5. *Abhijñānaśākuntala*, 1.20.
6. *Nītiśataka*, 91.
7. *Rāmāyaṇa*, 2.63.7.
8. Ibid., 2.63.9.
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11. *Hitopadeśa*, 1.22.
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14. *Pañcatantra*, *Aparīkṣitakāraka*, 93.
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22. 6.16.

Paropakāra

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laboratories to make life of the common people more comfortable and easy.

The prerequisite to doing good to others is to be good to oneself, to be a *satpuruṣa*. It is the *satpuruṣas* who engage themselves in doing good to others. It is about them that it is said that their prosperity is for the good of others. It is they who are compared with rivers which drink not their own waters or the trees which eat not their fruits or the clouds which partake not themselves the grains (though germinating them):

*pibanti nadyaḥ svayam eva nāmbhaḥ
khādanti na svādu phalāni vṛkṣāḥ/
payodharāḥ sasyam adanti naiva
paropakārāya satām vibhūtaḥ//⁵*

One has therefore to cultivate the quality of goodness to do good to others which leads to merit that every sane person desires to acquire. The gist of the vast Purāṇic literature, comprising eighteen works, as declares an old stanza in the most unequivocal terms, is to do good to others and not to cause trouble to them: *paropakāraḥ puṇyāya pāpāya parapiḍanam*.

For doing good to others, *paropakāra*, a strong will is necessary. A chicken-hearted man would think of his own self first. To move out of oneself needs determination, a resolute will. It is possible that in the course of doing good to others one may court trouble to oneself, even risk one's own life and invite penury and misery to oneself. Still if one persists in one's efforts, that betokens one's strong will. Maybe, while doing good or thinking of doing good one may have to dissuade the other person from following a course which may be harmful to him. For this one may have to use harsh words. One is however not to be deterred by them:

*dhīraḥ sadā racayate hi paropakāram
vākyam kaṭhoram api tasya dayārdragarbham/
nirvāntatoyanivahair jaladair visrstā
varṣopātā dādhati śītalavārigarbham//⁶*

"A strong-minded person always does good to others. Even his harsh words have in them an element of kindness. The hailstones showered by clouds after they have emptied themselves of their mass of water have in them cool water."

Paropakāra is a high watermark of a cultured person. He will go out of his way to share his wealth with the poor and the needy and thus win for himself undying fame. Kālidāsa refers to this very fact when he says that the loss of digits by the moon which is sucked digit by digit by gods is more appealing than the gaining of them : *paryāyapītasya surair himāṁśoḥ kalākṣayaḥ ślāghyataro he vṛddheḥ*⁷. The really good people never even speak of the good turn they do to others; lest it were to cause hurt to their self-esteem. They would prefer to keep themselves in the background and just do good. An interesting anecdote connected with the well-known savant Ishvarchandra Vidyasagar bears reproduction here. He was in the habit of going for morning walk. One morning he noticed a person crying at his sad fate. Vidyasagar approached him and asked him as to what was wrong with him. The man brushed him aside with the remark that he better mind his own business and leave him alone. When the latter persisted, the man was more insolent. 'Do you have means to help me', said he. 'Leave me to my fate', said he. With Vidyasagar still persisting, he told him that he had mortgaged his house for the marriage of his daughter and with him unable to pay the mortgage amount his house would have to be auctioned as per the court orders. The next day the auctioneer came at the appointed hour and told him to his surprise that his house would no longer require auction, somebody having paid the mortgage amount for him already, leaving him to infer that it must have been the same person who had accosted him the previous morning and with him he had been so harsh.

This is *paropakāra* in the true sense of the term.

It is only when a person accepts others as one's own can he help them. Limiting oneself to one's own self or to one's near

and dear one limits one's vision. With limited vision *paropakāra* is simply impossible. It is only when one opens up that one can pray for all that they cross all hurdles, that they have all their desires fulfilled, that they get happiness everywhere:

*saravas taratu durgāṇi sarvo bhadraṇi paśyatu/
sarvaḥ kāmān avāpnōtu sarvaḥ sarvatra nandatu//^β*

Reference

1. *Kuṭṭinīmata*, 724
2. *Vikramārkaacarita*, 11
3. *Nītiśataka*, 71
4. *Srīkaṇṭhacarita*, 25.115
5. *Nītiśataka*, 66.
6. *Sūktimuktāvali*, 125.
7. *Raghuvamśa*, V.16
8. *Vikramorvaśīya*, V.25

Titikṣā

Forbearance, Endurance

The other human value which goes well with *paropakāra* is *titikṣā*, forbearance, endurance. It could be defined as withstanding the bad turn or harm done to one by another person. This requires a strong moral fibre. Normally the tendency is to pay back in the same coin. Not to do so is the highest virtue. It is this which can bring about many a gain that otherwise would be impossible. No means would equal it to achieve them: *na titikṣāsamam asti sādhanam*.¹ If a person strong enough otherwise to retaliate or to inflict punishment were not to go in for it, he would earn the goodwill of the opponent and win him over. Rightly has it been said: *titikṣāskavacenaikaḥ sarvaṁ jayati samvṛtaḥ*,² "protected by the armour of endurance one conquers everything". By everything what is meant is not just the hostility of the other party but also his own unease born of the desire for revenge and the agony caused by the opponent. It is a measure of one who is in a position to repay the insults, the abuses and the mental and physical injury. An instance here would bear it out. Once the wife of the well-known Maharashtrian saint Tukaram got angry with him and hit him with a sugar cane. The saint picked up the cane, broke it into two, gave one part of it to his wife and began to chew the other part himself much to the shame of the former who felt utmost remorse for her thoughtless action. Mahatma Gandhi, even though fighting the British rule never even for a

moment bore ill-will for the British people. *Titikṣā* or endurance is a quality which leads in tandem with qualities like *śama*, tranquillity, *dama*, self-control, *uparati*, withdrawal, etc. to the realization of the self: *tasmād evaṁvic chānto dānta uparatas titikṣuḥ samaratīr bhūtvā 'tmany evātmānaṁ paśyati*.

Kṣamā is another name for *titikṣā*. The Vālmiki *Rāmāyaṇa*³ proclaims it to be (the greatest of the) gifts.

Reference

1. *Kirātārjunīya*, 2.43
2. *Subhāṣitānīvi*, 7.6
3. 5.55.6

Udyoga, Udyama

Effort

Knowledge needs will power to back it up. Even when realizing that one should control one's emotions, one may not actually be able to do so. A determined effort is a *sine qua non* for this.

As a matter of fact, effort or initiative is a desideratum for all human activities. Man has been so designed by nature that he cannot sit idle even for a moment, not doing anything: *na jātu tiṣṭhaty akarmakṛt*.¹ He is forced to indulge in some activity or the other compulsively as it were:

*kāryate hy avaśaḥ karma sarvaḥ prakṛtijair guṇaiḥ*².

This spontaneous/involuntary activity like eating, drinking, talking, walking, sleeping, is one thing and the conscious activity to engage productively in some thing or the other is another thing. It is this activity which is extolled throughout Sanskrit literature. *Udyoga*, *udyama* or *abhiyoga* as it is called there brings prosperity to a person who engages himself in it: *udyoginam puruṣasimham upaiti lakṣmīḥ*³. It is through this only that one achieves everything and not by mere pious wishes: *udyamena hi sidhyanti kāryāṇi na manorathaiḥ*. The deer do not gallop into the mouth of a lion by themselves when it is asleep :

*nahi suptasya simhasya praviśanti mukhe mṛgāḥ*⁴

The emphasis is on effort, initiative, application which goes as far back as the Vedic literature which proclaims in no uncertain terms that the deities do not make friends with a man

who does not toil: *na rte śrāntasya sakhyāya devāḥ*⁵. It is not untrue that the gods protect one who works hard:

*na mṛṣā śrāntam yad avanti devāḥ*⁶

Prosperity does not come to one who does not work hard. It is not effort casually made once that would lead to success. It is the persistence in it, the *nairantarya*, that matters. It is with this that even the most difficult things are accomplished. Even a rock gets thinner with the repeated fall of water:

*durlabhāny api sidhyanti kāryāṇi prodyamena hi/
silā 'pi tanutām yāti prapātenarṇaso muhuḥ//*

This is best illustrated by an old anecdote. As it goes, a Brahmin of Bengal of the name of Bopadeva invited the wrath of his teacher because of his slow wit. He would not follow the lesson even when it was repeated to him a number of times. The cussed teacher threw him out of the school much to his chagrin. While coming out of it he noticed a well and some round potholes near it. On enquiry from the village belles drawing water from the well, he came know that these were there because of the repeated placement of the pitchers on particular spots. This set him athinking. "If this could happen to the inert matter, could it not happen to him?" argued he to himself. This proved to be the turning point in his life. He repaired back to the school and assiduously pursued the lessons till they got soaked into his mind. With this he won back the confidence of the teacher and rose to be one of the greatest of the scholars of his time. Constant application is, therefore, the key to success.

Aśvaghoṣa from whom a stanza had been quoted above follows up that stanza with another one where he reproduces another mundane phenomenon in illustration of this. A person, says he, who does not stop in the midst of an act of rubbing fire sticks alone gets fire, the same is the case with the spiritual attainment (*siddhi*):

*araṇimanthane jātu yo virantum na ceṣṭate/
sa eva labhate vahnini evam siddher api sthitiḥ*⁸

Persistence in an activity can bring success even to one who may otherwise be weak in constitution. As per an old *subhāṣita* even an ant, if on the move, though slow, covers thousands of *yojanas* (a measure of distance in old times) while a *garuḍa*, if sitting idle, does not move even a step forward:

*yojanānām sahasrāṇi yāti gacchan pipīlikā/
agacchan vainateyo 'pi padam ekam na gacchati*⁹

In no case is one to give up initiative, even if success were not to attend one's efforts. "That is my fate" kind of approach is no good or "whatever has to come has to come anyway", "what fate has ordained for one, that one has to bear" kind of thinking would get a person nowhere. Fate or no fate, one should continue with one's efforts. One can never get oil from sesame seeds without exertion:

*na daivam api sañcintya tyajed udyogam ātmanah/
anudyogena tailāni tilebhyo nāptum arhati*¹⁰

To a person who exerts repair all fortunes impulsively as do frogs to a pond and birds to a full lake:

*nipānam iva maṇḍūkāḥ saraḥ pūrṇam ivāṇḍajāḥ/
sodyogaṁ naram āyānti vivaśāḥ sarvasampadaḥ*¹¹

So a person should take to exertion like a friend and negligence as an enemy for it leads to great achievement:

*udyamo mitravad grāhyaḥ pramādam śatruvad tyajet/
udyamena parā siddhiḥ*¹²

Not only should one exert, one should exert quickly (without loss of time) in matters that one has to accomplish :

*kāryeṣv avaśyakāryeṣu siddhaye kṣiprakāritā*¹³

Reference

1. *Gītā*, 3.5
2. *Ibid*,
3. *Pañcatantra*, 2.137
4. *Kavitāmṛtakūpa*, 57.
5. *Ṛgveda*, 4.33.11
6. *Ibid.*, 1.179.3
7. *Buddhacarita*, 26.63.
8. *Ibid.*, 26.64.
9. *Mārkaṇḍeya-purāṇa*, 18.39.
10. *Hitopadeśa*, *Prastāśvanā*, 32
11. *Hitopadeśa*, 167.
12. *Buddhacarita*, 26.73.
13. *Kumārasambhava*, 10.25.

Santoṣa

Contentment

Santoṣa is contentment. With this one overcomes greed. One is satisfied with what one has. With that comes peace of mind which simply is invaluable:

*sadā santuṣṭamanasaḥ sarvāḥ sukhamayā diśaḥ/
śarkarākaṇṭakādibhyo yatropānatpadaṁ śivam//¹*

“For a person who has contentment in mind all the quarters give happiness all the time like the comfort to the one well protected with shoes from gravel and thorns”.

A person could be very rich, still he could be very mean, not sharing his wealth with others, not even spending on himself. The real richness lies in the magnanimity of the mind which simply is invaluable:

*ādhyatvaṁ nāma tad idam
na tad dhanavattvaṁ yad akiñcanasamaṁ matam//²*

Santoṣa, contentment is said to be the greatest treasure, the only one at that, of man, *param nīdhānam*. There could be, as indeed there are, other treasures as well but they are all transitory, *kṣayāntāḥ*, as they are described. They come and go but certainly not *santoṣa*, contentment. It reflects the mental health. Once in it, one does not hanker after material things which in any case cannot provide real happiness which can come about only through tranquillity going with contentment. Rightly says the *Padma-purāṇa*:

*santoṣāmṛtatṛptānām yat sukham śāntacetasām/
kutas tad dhanalubdhānām itaś cetaś ca dhāvatām//³*

“How can those who run about in greed of wealth have that happiness that those tranquil in mind satiated with the nectar of contentment have ?”

One of the five *niyamas*, the duties prescribed for a man (which are not obligatory, a point that distinguishes them from the other types of duties, the *yamas*), *santoṣa* means not to crave for more than that which can be managed within the means available, *sannihitasādhanād adhikasyānupāditsā*. It is a mental state which could be just inborn in a man, *sahaja* or could be acquired through association with the good people. In no case it means loss of desires; it only signifies limiting them to means available, to derive the same comfort and ease even within one's limited resources as one would have derived in prolific ones. It is this that would not make a person eye with jealousy the rich life-style of the neighbour and lose his equanimity. A wise man has rightly said that if fate is to bestow crown, it bestows it in the form of contentment. One who suffers from craving even hundreds of miles is no distance while for a contented person even an object come to hand means nothing:

*na yojanaśatam dūram bādhyamānasya tṛṣṇayā/
santuṣṭasya karaprāpte 'py arthe bhavati nādarah//⁴*

Whatever is just needed to maintain themselves (lit. by which the stomach could be filled) is what the people can call their own. One who takes more than that to be so is a thief deserving of punishment:

*yāvad bhriyeta jaṭharam tāvat svatvam hi dehinām/
adhikam yo 'bhimanyeta sa steno daṇḍam arhati//⁵*

Nature has provided enough for everybody on the earth. One who appropriates to oneself a larger share of its resources, deprives others of the same to that extent which is at the source of all deprivation, misery and distress. It is advisable for such a

person to share the excess resources with his less fortunate brethren to bring back to them which is rightfully theirs. Such a person will have in his mind unlimited happiness, *saukhyam atulam*, no botheration, *na duḥkham*, no mental torture, *tapah*, no enemy, *na ca ripuḥ*⁶.

The present discussion on *santoṣa* could well be closed with its definition, a rare one indeed in Sanskrit literature, which the *Jābālayoga* furnishes in the following words:

*yadṛcchālābhato nityam prītir yā jāyate nṛṇām/
tat santoṣam viduḥ prājñāḥ parijñānaikatatparāḥ//*

“The pleasure that people derive from what comes to them as a matter of course, the wise who are solely devoted to the pursuit of knowledge know as *santoṣa*”.

Reference

1. *Śrīmadbhāgavata-purāṇa*, 7.15.7.
2. *Nītikalpataru*, 74.8.
3. 5.19.260.
4. *Hitopadeśa*, 1.148.
5. *Śrīmadbhāgavata-purāṇa*, 8.14.8.
6. *Manodūta*, 87.
7. 2.5.

Śauca

Purity

Śauca is one of the ten *niyamas*, enumerated by Atri:

*śaucam iyyā tapo dānam svādhyāyopasthānanigrahāḥ/
vratamaunopavāsam ca snānam ca niyamā daśa//¹*

It has been defined as avoiding a prohibited article of food, associating with the non-defamed ones and sticking to right conduct:

*abhakṣyaparihāraś ca samisargaś cāpy aninditaiḥ/
ācāre ca vyasthānam śaucam etat prakīrtitam//²*

According to the *Cāṇakya-rājanī-tīśāstra* it is of five types: compassion for all beings; control over the senses; truthfulness; mental purity and, the fifth one, purification by water:

*sarvabhūta-dayā śaucam śaucam indriyanigrahah/
satyam śaucam manah śaucam jalaśuddhis tu pancamam//³*

In more compact form it is divided into three categories: physical, mental and intellectual:

*svadehamalanirmokṣo mr̥jja-lābhyām mahāmune/
aham śuddham iti jñānam śaucam āhur maṇiṣiṇah//⁴*

“According to the wise, O great sage! The removal of the dirt of the body by the earth and the water is external purification. Cogitation is the mental purification while (the feeling that) ‘I am pure’ is intellectual purification.”

Of these the knowledge purification stands at the apex. It is this which should be assiduously sought. External purification is all right but it has to be followed up by internal one:

bāhyaśaucena yuktaḥ saṁs tathā cābhyantaram caret^१

“After purifying oneself externally (by bath etc.) one should also purify oneself internally.”

As is clear from the above, in the order of purification, the physical purification comes first. That is the *sine qua non* of any kind of purification, however lower in gradation it may be. Indian tradition lays great store by bath, the primary source of physical purification, for it is this which can make a person feel fresh after the night's sleep or the afternoon slumber or after the day's hard toil, particularly so in a tropical country like India where for most part of the year it is hot and humid with all the perspiration and body odours. A shower or a swim in a pool or pond or a river takes away the sloth. One feels thereby more active and alert. That is why it is said that “one may ignore a thousand things but bath one must have”, (*sātam vihāya bhoktavyam*) *sahasraṁ snānam ācaret*. With the root meaning connected with bath the words connected with rivers or their banks or their currents though ostensibly used in different meanings such as *snātaka*, *abhiṣeka*, *pārāvāra*, *pārīṇa*, *anukūla*, *pratikūla*, *anūpa*, *pratīpa*, etc. point to the act of bathing and the need of water for the same and the physical purity thereby.

With freshness achieved by physical purity the mental purity is just a step further. With mental purity the intellect would shine out and the true realization of oneself attained. The ancient texts emphasize that one has to continue with the follow up steps and not stop at physical purity only which howsoever good and desirable is not the be end and all end of life. One has to go on to the final step of knowledge purification. Says the *Jābālayoga* :

*jñānaśaucam parityajya bāhye yo ramate narah/
sa mūḍhaḥ kāñcanam tyaktvā loṣṭham gr̥hṇāti Suvrata*^१

“O Suvrata, one who is given to (lit. takes delight in) external purification in preference to the knowledge purification, that ignorant one, is just picking up a lump of earth in preference to gold.”

If a person is impure, is prone to evil thoughts, is subject to baser instincts, his physical purity has no meaning. He may have washed his body clean but his mind may continue to be unclean even if following rigorously the regimen of hygiene. That is what the *Liṅga-purāṇa* purports to say when it declares “Does the best of the Brahmins, get clean by regular (lit. always) bath in water ? So one should always carry out, as per the procedure, internal cleansing”:

*sadā vagāhya salile viśuddhaḥ kiṁ dvijottamaḥ/
tasmād ābhyantaram saucam sadā kāryam vidhānataḥ//*⁷

The internal cleansing has been explained as

*saumukhyād abhisamprītir arthinām darśane sadā/
satkṛtiś cānasūyā ca tadā śuddhir iti smṛtā//*⁸

“To always receive supplicants with pleasant face when on seeing them, to honour them and not to have ill-will for them”.

The *Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra* explains as to which things are purified by what

*adbhiḥ śudhyanti gātrāṇi buddhir jñānena śudhyati /
ahiṁsayā ca bhūtātmā manaḥ satyena śudhyati //*⁹

“The limbs are purified by water, the intellect by knowledge, the self by non-violence (as per the *Manusmṛti* by knowledge and austerities : *vidyātapobhyām bhūtātmā*) and the mind by truth.”

The purification automatically goes with certain objects like people who follow the conduct which is ideally expected of them. Underground water, a woman devoted to her husband, a king solicitous of (the welfare) of his subjects and a contented Brahmin are pure.

*śuci bhūmigataṁ toyam śucir nārī pativratā /
śuci kṣemaṇikaro rājā santoṣī brāhmaṇaḥ śuciḥ* //¹⁰

There is much talk of corruption these days. To stay clean in financial matters was very well recognized by ancient thinkers of India. That man is said to be pure who is pure in financial matters, *yo 'rthe śuciḥ sa śuciḥ*¹¹.

Reference

1. *Atri-saṁhitā*, 49
2. *Bhaviṣya-purāṇa*, 1.2.160
3. 2.40.
4. *Jābālayoga*, 1.22.
5. *Liṅga-purāṇa*, 8.32.
6. 1.22.
7. 8.35.
8. *Skanda-purāṇa*, *Ma.Kau.* 4.6
9. 1.5.1.
10. *Cāṇakyanīti*, 2.37.
11. *Manusmṛti*, 5.106.

Śīla

Indian tradition lays great emphasis on cultivating certain values like *paropakāra*, doing good to others, *titikṣā*, tolerance, *kṣamā*, forgiveness, *dama*, self-control, *indriyanigraha*, control over the senses, *dhṛti* or *dhairya*, fortitude, *śauca*, purity, *mṛdubhāṣitā* softness in speech etc. which could form ingredients of *śīla*, an umbrella for all the good qualities.

An enigmatic term *śīla* is all comprehensive as should be clear from the following stanza of the *Nīṭisataka*.¹ of Bhartṛhari :

*aiśvaryasya vibhūṣaṇaṁ sujanatā śauryasya vāksamīyamo
jñānasyopaśamaḥ śrutasya vinayo vittasya pātre vyayah/
akrodhas tapasaḥ kṣamā prabhavitur dharmasya nirvyājatā
sarveṣāṁ api sarvakāraṇaṁ idaṁ śīlaṁ param bhūṣaṇam//¹*

“Goodness is the ornament of prosperity, restraint in speech that of bravery, tranquillity that of knowledge, humility that of learning, investment in a deserving case that of money, absence of anger that of austerities, forgiveness that of the mighty, absence of pretension that of *dharma*, *śīla*, the all round source of all these, is the best of the ornaments”.

This very point is reinforced when it is said that there is no ornament like *śīla*, *vibhūṣaṇaṁ śīlasamaṁ na cānya*²

It is for this reason that it is praised sky high all through the Indian tradition. One who lives while observing it lives in reality: *śīlasya pālanam kurvan yo jīvati sa jīvati*³. It is like a guide in a dreary forest. *śīlaṁ hi śaraṇam saumya kāmāra tva deśikah*⁴.

“Śīla removes stigma of the family as also the dirt (*mala*) of sin. It adds to merit, spreads fame, bends the deities, removes the host of obstacles and leads to the attainment of heaven as also salvation with ease.”

Śīla has lack of hostility towards all beings in word, mind and action, compassion and charity:

*adrohaṁ sarvabhūteṣu karmaṇā manasā girā/
anugrahaś ca dānaṁ ca sīlam etat praśasyate*^{/6}

One who does not have it, for him knowledge, learning, austerities, riches, the spreading fame—all are like the bath of an elephant:

*vidyā śrutaṁ tapo vā py aiśvaryaṁ vā yaśahprakarṣo vā/
sīlarahitasya puṁso dviradasnānopamaṁ bhavati*^{/6}

At this point it is pertinent to pause and think as to what this śīla which is spoken of in superlative terms means. The *Amarakoṣa* explains it at two places. At one place it interprets it as pure conduct, *śucau tu carite sīlam*⁷ while at another as nature or good conduct, *sīlaṁ svabhāve sadvṛtte*. It however appears that śīla is much more than just good conduct. It is an innate goodness in man, a reservoir of good qualities that imparts him rare strength of character. It is not easy to define it nor is it easy to translate it. It is that sublimity that is felt to exist but which is difficult to describe. Right or good conduct is a poor rendering of it, not able to capture its spirit that goes far beyond it. It is this that makes a person easily approachable, *abhigamya* and impossible of being overawed, *adhr̥ṣya*. It is inner strength born of a myriad qualities that propel a person to follow the right path and shun the wrong one. It is this strength that imparts a rare equanimity to a person which makes him impervious to the totally contrary situations in life and facing them with the same equipoise. The great remain the same when favoured by fortune or visited by adversity: *sampattau ca vipattau ca mahatām eka rūpatā*⁹ like the sun which is red when

it rises and red when it sets, *udayan savitā raktaḥ rakta evāstam eti ca*. When told first that he was to be anointed a king and then that he was to be exiled, Rāma's face showed no expression, *nālakṣayata rāmasya kañcid ākāram ānane* (*ākāra*=expression). There was no perturbation in his mind as he was preparing to leave for the forest forsaking (the rule over) the earth as if he was different from all others :

*na vanam gantukāmasya tyajataś ca vasundharām/
sarvalokātigasyeva lakṣyate cittavikriyā//¹⁰*

It is this quality which makes a person look out of the ordinary. Where the devils would not dare to tread, the angels would walk easily.

In the *Mahābhārata* once Yudhiṣṭhira asked Bhīṣma as to why it is that while describing *dharma* everybody first talks of *śīla* and that he should explain it to him as to what it is. The latter told him that the same question Duryodhana had put to his father Dhṛtarāṣṭra when he (Duryodhana) was seething with jealousy at your excessive prosperity in former days at Indraprastha. Dhṛtarāṣṭra had told him that it is possible to conquer all the worlds with *śīla*. He had underlined its importance in the following words :

*śīlena hi trayo lokāḥ śakyā jetum na saṁśayaḥ/
nahi kiñcid asādhyam vai loka śīlavatām bhavet//¹¹*

"There is no doubt that with *śīla* (all) the three worlds are possible of conquest. For people possessed of *śīla* there is nothing impossible of achievement in this world."

Proceeding further he recounts to him the story of Prahlāda and Indra. By means of *śīla* Prahlāda wrested the kingdom of heaven from Indra which made him repair to Brhaspati which gave him knowledge to bring peace to his distraught mind. When Indra wanted more of it, Brhaspati asked him to go to Śukracārya, who when approached, asked Prahlāda to pass on his *śīla* to Indra which he did. One by one a quality after quality

like truth, *satya*, might/lustre, *tejas*, strength, *bala* came out of the body of Prahlāda and entered into that of Indra. With *śīla* gone, the royal fortune forsook Prahlāda. On being asked as to why she was doing so, she said:

*śīlena hi trayo lokās tvayā dharmajña nirjitāḥ/
tad vijñāya surendreṇa tava śīlam hr̥tam prabho//¹²*

“O ye, the knower of *dharma*, thou had conquered the three worlds through *śīla*. Having come to know of it, O Lord, Indra has wrested your *śīla* from thee.”

It is no wonder then that *śīla* is proclaimed as the best of the ornaments, *param bhūṣaṇam*. Leave aside the worldly ornaments which are prone to decay and disappearance unlike *śīla* which is constant, even the ornaments in the form of qualities severally would not stand up before *śīla*, that being an aggregate of them and more.

Śīla is not unoften referred to by the term *vṛtta*. Overwhelming importance is attached to its observance. It is said that one should keep it up assiduously while wealth (*vitta*, a word phonetically close to *vṛtta* but miles apart in sense) comes and goes. One does not lose anything if one loses wealth, *vitta*, but with the loss of character (that is the nearest equivalent of *vṛtta*) one is (just) lost :

*vṛttam yatnena saramksyam vittam āyāti yāti ca /
akṣiṇo vittataḥ kṣiṇo vṛttatas tu hato hataḥ //¹³*

As said earlier, it is not possible to give a single line definition of *śīla*. *Śīla* is like *śīla* just as we say sky is like sky or ocean is like ocean, *gaganam gaganākāram sāgaraḥ sāgaropamaḥ*. It is a great fortune to come together with a person endowed with *śīla*. Rightly has it been said :

*kiṁ madhunā kiṁ vidhunā kiṁ sudhayā kiṁ ca vasudhayā/
yadi hṛdayahāricaritaḥ puruṣaḥ punar eti nayanayor
ayanam//¹⁴*

“What has one to do with honey, the moon, the nectar as also with the whole earth, if a person with winsome character and conduct comes to view (lit. comes within the range of eyes).

Reference

1. Verse 80.
2. *Pañcatantra*, 2.155.
3. *Padma-purāṇa*, 46.95.
4. *Saundarananda*, 34.47
5. *Mahābhārata*, Śāntiparvan, 124.66.
6. *Nītidviṣaṣṭikā*, 33.
7. I.6.26
8. *Ibid.*, 3.3.202.
9. *Narābhārana*, 26
10. *Rāmāyaṇa*, 2.19.36
11. Śāntiparvan, 12.4.15
12. *Ibid.*, 124.61
13. Udyogaparvan, 66.10. *Vikramārkacarita*, 17.1
14. A popular Subhāṣitā

Asteya (Non-stealing)

Figuring among the ten essential marks of *Dharma*, it is defined by Kullūkabhṭṭa, the commentator of the *Manusmṛti* as the abstention from appropriation by unrighteous means of wealth and the like of others, *anyāyena paradhanādigrahanam steyam, tadabhāvo 'steyam*.¹ The definition of it in other works also follows almost the same line. The *Linga-purāṇa* defines it as non-appropriation in all thoughtfulness of the possessions of others even when in adversity even by mind, action and speech is what is *asteya* in brief :

*anādānam parāsvānam āpady api vicārataḥ/
manasā karmaṇā vācā tad asteyam samāsataḥ*//²

The *Jābālayoga* explains it as taking the mind off from appropriating (anything) be it straw, the jewel, gold or pearl :

*anyadiye tṛṇe ratne kāñcane mauktike 'pi vā/
manaso vinivṛttir yā tad asteyam vidur budhāḥ*//³

The same work in the very next stanza gives it a philosophic dimension:

*ātmany anātmabhāvena vyavahāravivarjitam/
yat tad asteyam ity uktam ātmavidbhir mahāmataḥ*//

“O ye of great intellect, the awakening in self the feeling of non-self and to proceed accordingly is said to be *asteya* by those who know the self.”

“According to the *Yogasūtra* that is said to be firmness in *asteya*, non-stealing where there is no acceptance of (a thing) not given. The riches are the outer self of people. One who takes away wealth would just kill them.”

*anādanam adattāsyāsteyavratam udīritam/
bāhyāḥ prāṇā nṛṇām artho haratā taṁ hatā hi te//⁴*

The same work says elsewhere that a wise person should in no case pick up from anywhere a thing dropped accidentally, forgotten, placed, put, laid which belongs to somebody else if it has not been given (to him).

“One who steals things of others has got stolen from him all these of his—this world and the other world, *Dharma*, patience, fortitude and intellect” :

*ayam lokah paraloko dharmo dhairyam dhṛtir matiḥ/
muṣṇatā parakīyasvaṁ muṣitam sarvaṁ apy adah//⁵*

“As of those of pure mind as exercise control in taking away the things of others, riches come of themselves choosing them for themselves, adversities fly away from them, their praise goes round, clearly enough, all the kinds of happiness of heaven approach them, the practitioners of non-stealing.”

*parārthagrahaṇe yesāṁ niyamaḥ śuddhacetasāṁ/
abhyāyānti śrīyas teṣāṁ svayam eva svayamvarāḥ//
anarthā dūrato yānti sādhuṇvādaḥ pravartate/
svargasaukhyāni dhaukante/
spṛuṣṭam asteyacāriṇām//⁶*

Those who are committed to non-violence should give the go by to the three types (mental, verbal and physical) of stealing they had followed: *heyam steyam tridhā 'rāddham ahimsāviṣṭacetasām*⁷.

There is a clear rule that one should not steal another's wealth even of the measure of a straw: *palālamātram api paradravyam na hartavyam*⁸. The father and the mother may

accept a (son) who has other faults but not the one who has his face blackened with the tar of stealth :

*doṣāntarajuṣaṁ jātu mātāpitṛādayo naram/
saṅgr̥hṇanti na tu steyamasikṛṣṇamukhaṁ naram//⁹*

It is the stealing committed in this birth that becomes the cause of assassination and other kinds of hardships in other despicable births :

*vadhādi kurute janmany asmin steyam anuṣṭhitam/
kartuḥ paratra duḥkhani vividhāni kuyoniṣu//¹⁰*

Why should stealing be such a bad thing ? Because the one who is being killed will suffer only for a moment but his good sons and grandsons will continue to undergo suffering for the whole of their lives [for the ignominy of having been born in the family of a thief].

*ekasyaikakṣanaṁ duḥkhaṁ māryamāṇasya jāyate/
suputrapautrasya punar yāvajjīvaṁ hr̥te dhane//¹¹*

In its long and chequered history there were periods in India when the kings could declare that there is no thief in their country, *na me steno janapade*, a bold claim indeed. In the *Chāndogya-upaniṣad*¹², Aśvapati, the king of Kekaya country, assured the sages led by Uddālaka repaired to him to learn from him the Vaiśvānara, the secret of the Supreme Being, to accept the monetary offering that he would like to make to them (the way he would like to make it to those who would be helping in the performance of the sacrifice), of the purity of the amount. None of his subjects indulges in stealing, said he. Not only that, there is no miser there either, no one indulges in drinking, no one is there who does not perform the fire-ritual, there is no licentious man not to speak of a licentious woman. That was India of olden times justifying the Chinese traveller Fahian's description of her as completely free from theft and dacoity, he not having had any such encounter anywhere through his travels

right across the country. He also mentions in his memoirs that the people did not lock their doors.

That theft was such an abhorrent to the people here gets support from the word *taskara*, the Sanskrit synonym of *cora*, thief. Etymologically that word means 'one who does that' *tat karoti taskarah*, that which is not even worth mentioning, to be referred to by the pronoun 'that', *tat*, that being so reprehensible.

Times changed. India was not the same as in the time of Aśvapati of the Upaniṣadic period or of the period of Fahian. Theft was indulged in. So was break-in in the houses. As a matter of fact, theft and break-in were perfected into an art. The *Mṛcchakatika* is a telling evidence of it. There is a full theft scene there which is depicted step by step. The thief Śarvilaka makes a breach in the fencing wall of the grove of trees round the house of Cārudatta, the hero of the play. He has now to break through the breach to reach the inner quadrangle and has then to look for a place which may drown the sound of his footsteps. He comes to the quadrangle but the door through which he is to pass screeches. He waits outside the door and finding two persons inside asleep wants to make sure whether they really are asleep or not. He first sends a dummy. He finds in the quadrangle only musical instruments making him infer that they are poor. But to make sure he adopts the tactic of spreading magical seeds. Their not expanding assures him that they really are poor. At this crucial moment the dream speech of the jester in which he requests sleeping Cārudatta to take possession of the bunch of gold ornaments makes him take possession of them and decamp.

Interestingly, there are patron deities for such activities like Kumāra Kārtikeya before whom prayers are offered for the success of these activities. Further, the thief refers to certain *ācāryas*, the authorities, on the art like Kanakaśakti who have recorded four types of burglary, the *sandhi-bhedas*. The other *ācāryas* referred to are Bhāskaranandin and Yogācārya, the latter claimed by the thief as his teacher who had given him an

ointment that would make him invisible to security personnel and make him immune to attack by a weapon. Even in theft there were certain norms to be observed: The thief would not touch the Brahmin's possessions.

That the thieves had cropped up in later period is beyond question. Otherwise, how could there be statements about *vidyā*, knowledge, that it is such wealth, *dhana* which neither a thief nor also a king can carry away: *na cauryahāryam na ca rājahāryam* and therefore is the foremost of all kinds of wealth, *vidyā-dhanam sarvadhanapradhānam*. Though stealing and robbery and such other malpractices had made inroads into society, the emphasis had all through been to keep away from them. Non-stealing is one of the ten characteristics of *dharma*, as noted earlier, *dharma* the bedrock of social structure, a must to adhere to for every individual.

Reference

1. Under *Manu.*, 10.63
2. 8.15
3. 1.11
4. 1.22
5. *Yogaśāstra*, 2.67
6. *Ibid.*, 2. 74-75
7. *Dharmāmṛta*, 4.49
8. *Cāṇakyaśūtraṇi*, 268
9. *Dharmāmṛta*, 4.560
10. *Padma-purāṇa*, 14.189
11. *Yogaśāstra*, 2.68.
12. 5.15.5.

Mātr-Pitr-Bhakti

Devotion to Mother and Father

A human value that has typical Indian touch is the utmost respect, bordering on worship, for parents. The Upaniṣad enjoins *mātrdevo bhava, pitrdevo bhava*, treat the mother as a deity, treat the father as a deity. Just as the idols in the temples are to be circumambulated, so are to be the mother and the father. According to an old stanza one who circumambulates the mother and the father, he (should be) taken to have circumambulated the (entire) earth with its seven continents:

*mātaram pitaram cāpi yo hi kuryāt pradakṣiṇam/
pradakṣiṇīkṛtā tena saptadvīpā vasundharā//*

This implies that he would have been supposed to have had the round of all the holy places, the earth bring their locale. There is a special message in the story which speaks of the contest between the sons of Śiva, Kārtikeya and Gaṇeśa to go round the earth, the winning parameter being the completion of the round quicker. While Kārtikeya started taking a round of the earth, Gaṇeśa, the wise god that he is, just went round his parents, Śiva and Pārvatī. His going round them was also going round the earth. Obviously going round the parents took far little time than his brother Kārtikeya's going round the earth. Gaṇeśa won the contest.

A byword for devotion to parents is Śravaṇa Kumāra, a character in one of the stories that goes round the Indian households. He would move about carrying his old blind parents

on pole with slings on either side to carry weight according to popular legend; though there is nothing of it in the *Vālmiki-Rāmāyaṇa*; the primary source of the legend which is connected there with King Daśaratha of Ayodhyā who mortified under the impact of the events leading to the exile of his dearest of the dear son recounts it to Kausalyā, the eldest of his queens. He tells her that the tragedy that has befallen him is due to his own untoward action. One has to reap the fruit of whatever one does, good or bad. When he was young he went out to a forest ahunting. He had earned the reputation even at that young age of piercing the aim by sound alone. One early morning when it was still dark, he slipped out unnoticed by others on his hunting spree. The sound of a pitcher being filled with water reached his ears. He mistook it as the sound of an elephant drinking water and shot an arrow in the direction from where the sound had come. As the arrow struck, the sound of *hā hā* in human voice reached his ears followed by the words as to why he, an ascetic living in a forest subsisting on the forest produce, sporting matted hair and donning tree-bark with enmity towards none, should have been hit like this. He had then realized that he had committed a terrible mistake. Totally distraught, he had reached the place from where were coming these words and saw a young lad soiled in blood with the arrow dug in him. He was writhing in pain. He was bemoaning the lot of his parents, blind and helpless (who had sent him to fetch water for them) living as they did in hermitage. He pointed to the narrow path that would lead to it. He asked him, unable to stand the pain, to pull the arrow out, knowing that it meant sure death for him, and convey the sad news to his parents which he did inviting the wrath of his father who cursed him to lose life with the same grief for his son from which he would be losing it. The father further told him to prepare a pyre for his son and place him and his wife along with the dead body of his son. He had been carrying this curse, he tells Kausalyā all his life. The curse is telling on him now.

An equally telling instance of devotion to father is provided by Rāma, his son. He assures Kaikeyī, his step mother of his decision to repair to forest,¹ in fulfilment of the boons that his father Daśaratha had given her in lieu of her saving his life in a combat with the demons in aid of the gods earlier. In a ringing tone he says:

*nahy ato dharmacaraṇaṁ kiñcid asti mahattaram/
yathā pitari śuśrūṣā tasya vā vacanakriyā//*

“There is no greater virtue than to serve the father or to carry out his words”.²

Daśaratha was so stricken with sorrow that he even advised Rāma to arrest him and assume kingship to which he simply did not agree. Finding him unflinching in his resolve to leave for forest, there and then, he begged of him to just stay back and leave the next morning so that he could be with him for one day more. Rāma saw no merit in that. “Who will confer on me the merit that I shall reap by going today, said he. And then come the most memorable of the words:

*pitā hi daivatam tāta devatānām api smṛtam/
tasmād daivatam ity eva kariṣyami pitur vacaḥ//³*

“The father is a very God, even the celestials say this. Therefore, looking upon him as a divinity I shall follow his words.”

According to the *Brahmāṇḍa-purāṇa* there is no doubt that one devoted to one’s father gets (the fruit of) sacrifices, the Vedas, the desired objects, the varied austerities, long life and austerities :

*yajñān vedāns tathā kāmāns tapāṁsi vividhāni ca/
prāpnoty āyuh tapaś caiva pitṛbhakto na saṁśayaḥ//⁴*

A question may well come up over here. If both the father and the mother are divinities are they to be treated on an equal footing? There may be situations when a child may get conflicting

signals from both. What should be the guiding principle for him then? He has just to turn to old texts for an answer. They are very clear. The mother excels the father a thousand times : *sahasraṁ hi pitur mātā gauraveṇātiricyate*⁵. The touch of the mother's hand is like the handful of water for one who is in need of it, *hastasparsō hi mātīṇām ajalasya jalāñjaliḥ*⁶. The effort that the mother puts in bringing up a child has no match to that of the father. He is only the provider. The mother had delivered him, he having been a part of her very being. The *Skanda-purāṇa* is very right in speaking of her as "there is no shade like her, no resort like her, no security like her, no waterhouse like her" :

*nāsti mātṛsamā chāyā nāsti mātṛsamā gatiḥ/
nāsti mātṛsamam trāṇam nāsti mātṛsamā prapāḥ*⁷

Before the discussion on the utmost reverence for the mother and the father is brought to a close, it may be pertinent to mention that it is not only the biological mother and the father who are called so but also some others. Who they are the following verse makes clear:

*gurupatnī rājapatnī jyēṣṭhapatnī tathaiva ca/
patnī mātā svamātā ca pañcaitā mātaraḥ smṛtāḥ*⁸

*janakaś copanetā ca yaś ca vidyām prayacchati/
annadātā bhayatrātā pañcaite pitarāḥ smṛtāḥ*⁹

"The wife of the teacher, the wife of the king, the wife of the elder brother, the mother of the wife (the mother-in-law) and one's own mother – these five are said to be mothers."

"One who gives birth, one who initiates, one who imparts knowledge, one who provides food and one who affords protection from fear – these five are considered fathers."

According to Indian ethos mother is weightier than the earth and the father is loftier than the sky:

*mātā gurutarā bhūmeḥ khāt pitoccataras tathā*¹⁰

The sons can go wrong to mother but not the mother to sons : *mātari bhavanti sutānāṃ mantavaḥ kila suteṣu na mātuh.*¹¹

The mother has her own way of looking at children. There is a very interesting episode about it. A child cried aloud in its cradle. The mother came running to it from the kitchen and put the milk-bottle in its mouth. The child fell silent. The mother concluded that the child is growing. It can indicate its need for food with its cries. It was night. The child cried again. The mother saw the bed was wet. Well, to the mother it was indication that the child can feel the bed is wet and that its cries are indicative of it. She picked it up and placed it in the dry patch of the bed. The mother took it as the process of the growth of the child. With its cries it can indicate that the bed is wet and that it needs to be shifted to a dry patch. The child while walking on its knees got up to the railing of the house and threw the mother's purse down. The mother did not scold the child. She instead took it that it is growing in intellect and that it wants to do something. One day the lightning flashed in the sky and the clouds thundered. The scared child clung to the mother who took this action of it as indication of its ability to discriminate that something is wrong somewhere. The faculty of discrimination is unfolding in it. The mother took it that way. Every action of the child the mother interpreted in a positive light. That is the mother.

It is said that when Rāma was on the throne after the period of exile he was very keen to know about the condition of his people. He sent out spies to mix with them to find out as to how they felt. One day a spy noticed that a mother was keen to breastfeed the child but the same did not accept it. It would turn its face away every time the mother tried for it. The mother then addressing the child said, My dear child, we are all born in the Rāma-rājya, the kingdom of Rāma where nobody is going to have re-birth. Since she may have no second chance of breast-feeding you, you please do not deny me the privilege of breast-feeding that I have got as mother in this life. The spy heard these words and tears rolled out of his eyes! That is the mother.

The love and the care of the mother for the offspring is not limited to human beings only. Even the animals are not immune to them. There is a story that runs as follows : A trader had once purchased two cows which were very similar to each other, the same complexion, the same build. He was not able to make which one of them was the mother and which one the offspring. He went to the king who also was not able to decide. He then called his minister. He also could give no answer. He asked for some time to decide the issue. The next day, he said, he might be able to give the answer. In great worry he repaired to his house. His wife noticed the worry and when apprised of the problem said it was so easy. The next day she accompanied the minister to the court. The mother-daughter duo of the cows was brought there. The minister's wife served the same type of fodder and in the same quantity to both. The offspring quickly grazed her share and began then to have the fodder from the share of the other cow, that one looking on meekly at her. That decided the issue. The one that looked on without batting an eyelid was the mother and the other one its offspring. That is the mother!

It is not for no reason that the mother is proclaimed that she (and the motherland) are superior to even heaven : *jananī janmabhūmiś ca svargād api garīyasī*.

Reference

1. *Rāmāyaṇa*, Ayodhyākāṇḍa, Canto 63.
2. Ibid, Ayodhyākāṇḍa, 19.22.
3. Ibid, Ayodhyākāṇḍa, 34.52.
4. 3.19.68
5. *Bālarāmāyaṇa*, 4.30.
6. *Pratimānātaka*, 3.13.
7. Ma.Kau. 6.103-104.
8. *Narābharaṇa*, 2.8
9. *Nītisāstra*, 80.
10. *Mahābhārata*, Vanaparvan 313.60
11. *Caitanyacandrodaya*, 1.61

Guru-Bhakti

Devotion to Teacher

Just as it is with the parents, so is it with the teacher. He is also to be shown utmost respect, to be treated as a deity, *ācāryadevo bhava*.

*gurur brahmā gurur viṣṇur gurur devo maheśvaraḥ/
guruḥ sākṣāt parabrahma tasmai śrīgurave namaḥ//¹*

In India the relationship between the teacher and the student was unique. The teacher while initiating and investing a student with the sacred thread would absorb him within himself and would make him a part of his own self, much like (a mother) the womb : *ācārya upanayamāno brahmacāriṇaṁ kṛṇute garbham antaḥ*². The simile is very significant here. Just as the unborn child, while it is still in womb, receives nourishment from the mother in the same way the student receives physical, mental and spiritual nourishment from his teacher. He, thenceforth, from the time of *upanayana*, the initiation, is the responsibility of the teacher. In his, the teacher's 'āśrama, call it *gurukula*, it is the teacher who is to provide for his material needs besides teaching him the various disciplines, the skills and arts in addition to inculcating in him the discipline, the *anuśāsana*, he being *śiṣya*, who is to be taught discipline, vide the etymology of the word : *śās+ya*, *śās* = *anuśiṣṭi*, *anuśiṣṭi*=discipline and is to be instructed in good manners, proper behaviour, he being *vineya*, another Sanskrit term for *śiṣya*. The role of the *ācārya*

or the *guru* in the life of the student being so all embracing, the student is expected to carry in his mind utmost respect for him every minute. Still a particular day, variously called Gurupūrṇimā, Vyāsapūjā is earmarked when all students, past and present, come together to offer their respect to the teacher in a formal way as a mark of gratitude to him. Interestingly, this practice is not limited only to India. It is found even in countries outside India, particularly the ones that have come deep under its cultural influence. One of these is Thailand where the writer of these lines had the opportunity to teach. He was witness to the *gurupūjā* there. The ceremony was held in the Silpakorn University, Bangkok. It was July 13, 1978. The ceremony began at 8 in the morning. First the Buddhist Bhikṣus, monks, chanted the prayers in Pali and blessed the gathering. They were given alms with which they left. By the time it was 9.00 clock. Everybody was waiting anxiously. The reason : The Princess of the country was to join the ceremony. She came around 9.30. A.M. and took her seat in the front row. This was followed by the singing by a group of students of a hymn in praise of *guru*, *guru-stuti*, in Sanskrit in all seriousness, in melodious voice, with eyes closed and hands folded, their impeccable pronunciation the envy of any Indian Sanskritist. One side were the students, the other side the teachers, three of them in the front row who were very very elderly. Of these three one was so elderly that he had taught even the father of the present king. After the hymn in praise of the *guru* — Thai has the same words for teacher as has India *guru* and *ācārya* pronounced *khru* and *āchārn*—came forward students one by one and offered a basket of flowers, jossicks and candles to one of these three teachers who would touch it as a mark of acceptance of it and would apply a triangular *tilaka* (forehead-mark) on his forehead which is symbolic of the Divine Trinity, Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Maheśa. The student would then pass on to the second teacher who would tie a white thread which seems to be symbolic of the *rakṣā-bandhana*, protective thread on the wrist of the student. The

student then would move to the third teacher who would offer him a boiled egg to eat. After every student had followed this ritual the ceremony came to an end.

It was an experience in itself to witness this ceremony in a different land away from Indian shores.

The teacher is such an inspiration that even an image of him would fill one with the fervour and the skill to learn. The Ekalavya story of the *Mahābhārata*³ is just an instance of it.

Ekalavya, the son of the Niṣāda chieftain Hiranyadhanus, having heard of skill of Droṇa in archery approached him to learn it from him but the latter did not take him under his tutelage, he being the son of a Niṣāda for one, a low caste, and for fear of his excelling his other pupils, the Kaurava and the Pāṇḍava princes. He then repaired to forest, made an image of clay of Droṇa, and instilling the feeling in himself that he is his teacher started practice in archery in all seriousness. Once the Kaurava and Pāṇḍava princes went to forest with Droṇa's permission for hunting. A man of his own volition followed them with hunting equipment and a dog which made way to the place where the Niṣāda lad was practising archery and started barking. To silence it the Niṣāda lad hurled at it seven arrows in one shot. The dog then came to the Pāṇḍava princes who were totally taken aback at the feat. Wanting to know as to who had done it, they came upon the place where the Niṣāda lad was practising archery. He told them on enquiry that he was the pupil of Droṇa. This particularly upset Arjuna to whom Droṇa had confided that none among his pupils would excel him in the skill in archery. When told of the Niṣāda boy being his pupil by Arjuna and his skill in archery that seemed to excel that of his Droṇa felt surprised (he had not taught anyone like him). Led by Arjuna he came to the lad and saw him practising archery. The lad prostrated before him on noticing him and claimed to be his pupil. "If so, give me the *guru-dakṣiṇā*, the fee due to a teacher" said Droṇa. Pleased with this demand, the lad, Ekalavya offered to provide him whatever he thought fit. Droṇa then asked for his

right thumb. This stunned the lad but he did not flinch. Cut asunder he immediately the thumb and offered it to him thus depriving himself forever of the alacrity in shooting arrows and making Droṇa truthful to his words to Arjuna that there would not be any one who would excel him in archery among his pupils. This was a specimen of devotion to a teacher which has no parallel in human history. With this Ekalavya earned undying fame as an icon of devotion to teacher.

The reverence for teacher is at such a peak that the scholars, the repositories of learning in themselves, would attribute whatever the excellence in their work to their teacher and whatever the otherwise of it to their own self:

*yad atra sauṣṭhavam kiñcid tad guror eva me nahi/
yad atrāsauṣṭhavam kiñcid tan mamaiva guror nahi//*

It was the reverence for his teacher that led the great grammarian-philosopher Bhartṛhari to ascribe his work to his teacher:

*nyāyaprasthānamārgāṅs tān abhyasya svaṁ ca darśanam/
praṇīto guruṇā 'śmākam ayam āgamasangrahaḥ//⁴*

The Sanskrit literature furnishes many instances of the total and unquestioned obedience of the pupils to the word of the teacher. One such as recorded in the *Mahābhārata* runs as follows: There was a sage of the name of Āpoda-Dhaumya. He had three disciples Upamanyu, Āruṇi and Veda. He asked Āruṇi who was from Pāñcāla country to go and stop up a breach in the water course of a certain field. Āruṇi repaired to the spot but could not stop up the breach by ordinary means. He then went down into the breach and lay down there himself. The water was thus confined. After some time Āpoda-Dhaumya enquired of the whereabouts of Āruṇi from his other disciples who told him that he had been sent by him to stop the breach. Āpoda-Dhaumya having approached the place shouted "where are you my child". Āruṇi hearing his voice told him that not having been able to

prevent water running out he had entered himself into the breach. The preceptor then told him that since he has opened the water course he shall thenceforth be known by the name Uddālaka and because he had obeyed his words he would be blessed with good fortune with the Vedas and the Dharmaśāstras shining in him.

The other disciple of his Upamanyu he asked to go and look after the cows. After tending them the whole day he returned in the evening to his preceptor's house. The preceptor noticing him in good physical condition enquired of him as to on what he was subsisting. "On alms", said he. "That is no good," said the preceptor. "You should not use the alms without offering them to me". Told thus Upamanyu continued with tending the cows. When he came back to the preceptor the next day in the evening, the latter noticed his good physical condition. The same question he repeated in answer to which the former (Upamanyu) said that he went abegging the second time and he subsisted on what he got therefrom. The preceptor disapproved of the practice, that leading to the diminishing of the support of others who live by begging which would also prove him to be covetous. Having heard this, Upamanyu went away to tend the cows. Returning in the evening and finding him in good physical condition the preceptor repeated the usual query in answer to which he (Upamanya) said that he was subsisting on the milk of the cows evoking thereby the disapproval of the preceptor for having it without his permission. He listened to it and went about his errand. It was the same story this time too. On the preceptor's query as to on what he was subsisting, he said that he was helping himself with the froth that the calves throw out while sucking their mothers' teats. No good, said the preceptor, for, he was thus depriving the calves of their full share of food. That was unlawful. Upamanyu went back on his errand. This time with nothing to eat and the hunger overtaking him he ate the leaves of the Arka plant which led to the loss of his vision. As he was wandering about, he fell into a pit. The evening fell.

Upamanyu not having returned, the preceptor went into the forest in search of him along with his other disciples. He shouted for him. Hearing his shouts Upamanyu shouted back that he was in the pit and recounted to him all that had happened. The preceptor asked him to sing a hymn in praise of Aśvins, the divine physicians who on hearing it and being pleased with it asked him to partake of a cake (*apūpa*) to which he did not agree; saying he had first to offer it to his preceptor thus further pleasing them who then apart from restoring his eyesight made his teeth made of black iron turn golden. The preceptor showered on him the same blessings as he had showered on Āruni.

Now it was the turn of the third disciple, Veda whom the preceptor asked to stay in his house and serve him which he did for long braving heat, cold, hunger and thirst without even a murmur like an ox under the burthens of his master, earning thus for himself a shower of blessings from him that included good fortune and universal knowledge.

The other instance pertains to the teacher-pupil duo Prabhākaramiśra and Kumārilabhaṭṭa, the two great authorities on Mīmāṃsā. Kumārilabhaṭṭa refuted many a doctrine of his preceptor (Prabhākaramiśra). At the end of it he was so stricken with remorse that he lit a pyre of chaff and beseating himself in it burnt himself to death. On the one side was his intellectual honesty in that he refuted the doctrines of his teacher that he could not stand scrutiny though they were of his teacher from whom he had learnt the system; on the other was his reverence for his teacher that gnawed at his conscience. Can any other culture throw up such an instance of unquestioned obedience to the dictates of teachers? It is a value which is typical of India.

In this connection the writer of these lines would like to reproduce his own experience. The concept of Time and Space in the *Vākyapadiya* was the topic he was working on for his Ph.D. at the Banaras Hindu University. For this he needed to have a good grasp of the *Vākyapadiya*, admittedly one of the

most abstruse of the Sanskrit grammatico-philosophical texts. There was only one teacher in Varanasi who could teach it. He was Pandit Raghu Nath Sharma Pandey who later immortalized himself by writing the exhaustive commentary 'Ambakartrī' on it. He was staying in a Math in a locality called Kabirchaura while the writer of these times was staying in the Dey Hostel, the last ones among the hostels of the said University with a sprawling campus running into several miles. The only means of commuting with him coming as he did from an average family, was a bicycle that he had bought from the savings from his meagre scholarship. He pedalled to the teacher (Pandit Raghu Nath Sharma) one day early afternoon covering a distance of about 15 KMs. and requested him to teach him the *Vākyapadīya* to which he agreed asking him to come the following day at 2.00 P.M. sharp. Following his instruction he reached his place at the appointed hour. He was asleep. Around 4.00 P.M. he got up and noticing him said 'it is too late now. Come tomorrow at 2.00 P.M.' Without demur he went back. The next day when he went to him he found him preparing his meals. Looking at him he said 'I am preparing my lunch. Then I will have it. Then I have to have some rest. It will not be possible today.-Come tomorrow but mind it, it has to be exact 2.00 P.M.' The next day when he went to him he met him in the street. Noticing him he said, 'O, so you have come. Today I have to go somewhere. That is important. Come next day at 2.00 P.M. It has to be 2.00 P.M. sharp.' He left with not strain on his face whatever as usual. The next day when he went to him he said 'he was not feeling well'. It has to be next day 2.00 P.M. He went back with no sign of being upset with regular turn-backs and 24-25 mile commuting going waste. That was the fifth day. When the next day he went to him he was waiting for him. He started teaching him from 2.00 P.M. onwards and continued upto 7.00 P.M. The writer of these lines was completely exhausted, but the teacher would not stop. It was getting dark. A hurricane lamp was lit. The teaching continued. Then he said, 'Sir, you must be tired by now (he had

to be polite, how could he say that he was tired) and we may stop now'. 'No. I am not tired, go on', said he. Then after a while realizing that he was of tender age and the most abstruse text of the *Vākyapadiya* might be a great strain on him, he said, 'enough for today. The rest we shall take up the next day' and that was the last he had put him off. Everyday he would find him eagerly waiting for him. By putting him off repeatedly he wanted to test his eagerness to learn and when he had found out that he was determined to learn and nothing would deter him, he opened wide the gates of his knowledge. When he recalls this, tears well up in his eyes. The teachers of old would perpetuate their learning by identifying true seekers, *pātrapratigatā vidyā*. If they could not identify the deserving one, they would better not part with their knowledge which died out with them. This is partly responsible for the shrinkage of much of India's intellectual wealth.

There are four words for teacher in Sanskrit: *guru*, *ācārya*, *upādhyāya*, *śikṣaka*. *Guru* and *ācārya* have been explained above. *Upādhyāya* and *śikṣaka* are now taken up for explanation. *Upādhyāya* is one by approaching whom teaching is received; *upetyādhyāyate* 'smād ity upādhyāyah'. That is the etymology of the word. *Śikṣaka* is formed from *śikṣ* meaning *vidyābhyāsa*, *śikṣaka* is he who imparts knowledge. The great poet Kālidāsa sets forth a standard for an ideal teacher:

*śliṣṭā kriyā kasyacid ātmasaṁsthā
saṁkrāntir anyasya viśeṣayuktā /
yasyobhayaṁ sādhu sa śikṣakāṇām
dhuri pratisthāpayitavya eva ॥*

"One excels in action; another in communication skill. One who excels in both deserves to be placed at the head of teachers'.

While students have to be obedient to teacher, the teacher has also to be considerate to their needs. A unique relationship subsisted between the teacher and the taught. He would accept

a student, *Brahmacārin* (the term originally signifying a religious student came to signify later a student in general), within himself as a womb, *brahmacāriṇaṁ kṛṇute garbham antaḥ*, a metaphor equating the student to a child in the womb of the mother who gets nourishment from her own body till it is delivered. The teacher would go to the extent of invoking the divine powers to have students from all over:

*ā me yantu brahmacāriṇaḥ.*⁵

The teacher would be at great pains to identify the real seeker of knowledge by putting him to the severest of the severe tests as exemplified by the instances reproduced earlier and after he had identified him, there was no going back for him. He would open floodgates of knowledge in passing on to him whatever he knew hoping that he would excel him. To be surpassed by him was his most ardent wish:

sarvato jayam anvichec chiṣyād icchet parājayam

“One should aspire victory over all others but defeat from the student (there is another reading here: *putrāt śiṣyāt parājayam* with *putrāt* it goes with father: one should aspire for defeat from son. That is the glory for him.) The excelling of the student brings fame to him: *śiṣyaprakarṣo yaśase gurūṇām*.

The *Śāstras* recount three ways for acquiring knowledge, the first, the service to teacher, the second, good amount of money, the third the exchange, one teaching one discipline to the other and learning another discipline from him in exchange:

*guruśuśrūṣayā vidyā puṣkalena dhanena vā/
athavā vidyayā vidyā catruthī naiva vidyate*//⁶

These three are the only ones for acquiring knowledge. There is no fourth one.

Of the three ways of acquiring knowledge primacy has been accorded to the service to teacher. The other two are related to a class and a category of people. It is the princely class or the

nobility that would engage teachers by paying them rich rewards and conferring on them the title of Rāja-pañḍita to teach their young ones. For the general public it was the self-effacing teacher with limited wants who was the source of learning the three *rs* and beyond. The society taking upon itself the duty of taking care of his needs, he would not expect anything from his students except service in exchange for parting with his knowledge. The word *śuśrūṣā* used in the expression *guruśuśrūṣayā* in the verse above needs careful cognizance here. Literally it means 'the desire to listen' formed as it is from *śru* 'to listen' with the desiderative suffix *sa (n)*. Since this desire could be fulfilled only with service (to the teacher of course), it came to mean 'service'. The third means of learning by exchange refers to those people who having attained a level of learning are interested in furthering their knowledge by venturing into other disciplines.

Reference

1. *Gurugītā*, verse 25.
2. *Atharvaveda*, 11.7.
3. *Mahābhārata*, Ādiparvan, Adhyāya 132
4. II. 484
5. *Mālavikāgnimitra*. 1.16
5. *Viṣṇu-Smṛti*, 73.12
6. *Subhāṣitaratnabhāṇḍāgara*, *Sāmānyanīti*, 1.65.257.

Indriyanigraha

Control over the Senses

Indian tradition lays far too much of stress on the control over the senses, and justifiably so, for, the senses, the *indriyas*, as says the Lord in the *Bhagavadgītā*, are impetuous, *pramāthīni* and consequently carry off the mind by force, *prasabham* even if a person were to 'strive and be ever discerning, *vipaścitaḥ*. One who exercises control over the senses, says further the Lord, has his intellect stabilized, *tasya prajñā pratiṣṭhitā*. Self-discipline is not a matter of intelligence, it is that of will and emotions.

Indriyanigraha or control over the senses is counted among the ten characteristic features of *Dharma* as also the five which form the mandatory code of conduct for (all) the four castes. Kullūkabhaṭṭa, the commentator of the *Manusmṛiti* defines it as *viṣayebhyaś cakṣurādivāraṇam indriyanigrahaḥ*, to turn back eyes, etc. from the sense-objects which can be possible only through firm resolve. Even that may not always hold, even the ascetics with long years of hard austerities having been seen faltering. This faltering Bhartṛhari has noticed in his *Śṛṅgārasataka* and put it most graphically:

*viśvāmitraparāśaraprabhṛtayo vātāmbuparṇāśanā
te 'pi strīmukhapaṅkajam sulalitam dṛṣṭvaiva moham gatāḥ/
śālyānnām saghṛtam payodadhiyutam bhuñjanti ye mānavās
teṣām indriyanigraho yadi bhaved vindhyas taret sāgare//¹*

“Viśvāmitra, Parāśara and the like just subsisted on air, water and leaves. Even they lost control over themselves by just looking at the beautiful lotus-like face of a woman. The (ordinary) men who help themselves with rice with dressing of ghee and milk or curd, were they to exercise control over the senses, it would be like the mount Vindhya swimming in the ocean.”

Aśvaghoṣa is very right when he says that one may or may not suffer torment from an enemy but one does suffer that from the sense organs everywhere and always :

*dviṣadbhiḥ śatrubhiḥ kaścit kadācit pīḍyate na vā/
indriyair bādhyate sarvaḥ sarvatra ca sadaiva ca/β*

It is because of the senses losing control and going astray that one is advised to avoid being with mother, sister and daughter in a secluded place:

*mātrā svasrā duhitrā vā na viviktāsano bhavet/
balavān indriyagrāmo vidvāṁsam api karṣati/β*

The senses are so overpowering that they would pull (to wards the sense objects) even a wise man.

The senses are to be put under control is just fine. But what can exercise control over them ? The answer is simple. It is the mind. The Lord in the *Bhagavadgītā* compares the senses to horses and the mind to reins: *indriyāṇi hayān āhur manāḥ pragraham eva ca*. It is the mind that is to rein in the *indriyas*, the senses that like to break loose. But the mind itself may need control. It has its own ways of working. There is certain built-in mechanism in it. By its very nature it is impetuous, *pramāthi*, forceful, *balavad*, wayward, *drḍham*. It is as difficult to control it as it is the wind, *tasyāhaṁ nigrāhaṁ manye vāyor iva suduṣkaram*. To control it is difficult, no doubt, but not impossible. It can be brought under control by *abhyāsa*, constant practice and *vairāgya*, detachment. And it is here that the intellect comes in. It is this that gives direction to the fickle mind. But the intellect may have its discursiveness. The intellect,

the *buddhi*, the discriminatory faculty cannot be allowed to wander about. It has to be one-pointed. A determined effort is necessary to get the mind under the control of *buddhi* out of its natural habit of rambling from object to object. It has to cultivate – and it is here that *abhyāsa* comes in – steadiness. An unsteady mind cannot think clearly, cannot concentrate on a job and cannot do any work efficiently. Scientists, explorers and thinkers who made great discoveries subdued their senses, concentrated their attention and got absorbed in a single thought of finding a solution to a problem. Even amongst the most talented of the personalities few have the penetration and the absorption of the degree required of success. It is what the Lord terms in the *Gītā* as the *vyavasāytmikā buddhi*.⁴ With this *buddhi* the mind would work straight, the senses would function in straight direction being directed as they would be by mind. It is a common enough experience that when a person is engaged in a singleminded pursuit, even the hunger and the thirst would not torment him. There is purpose in life then, the purpose which is the fountainhead of fulfilment.

To exercise control over senses, mind and *buddhi*, as said earlier, is not easy. Still there is no harm in trying for it. For, the end result is attainment of peace, *śānti* which is the source of happiness, *sukha*. One who has developed this control over the senses, wherever he may dwell, that place would be Kukrukṣetra and Naimiṣa. He would then have conquered the whole world.

Reference

1. Verse 65
2. *Saundarananda*, 13.32
3. *Manusmṛti*, 2.215
4. 2.41

Atithisatkāra

Respect for Guests

Indian tradition accords highest respect to guests, *atithis*. A pupil on completion of education is instructed by his teacher to treat guests as deities: *atithidevo bhava*. These words occurring in the Śikṣāvallī of the *Taittirīya-upaniṣad* have been adopted by the Ministry of Tourism as the motto reflecting as they do the ethos of India.

It is not necessary that the guest be known to the host to deserve hospitality. The *Nārada-purāṇa* articulates firmly the view that one come from another village with no (background) information about his name and family is termed by the wise as *atithi*, guest. He is to be worshipped like Viṣṇu :

*ajñātagotranāmānam anyagrāmād upāgatam/
vipaścito 'tithim prāhur viṣṇuvat tam prapūjayet//¹*

It is imperative that the food should first be offered to a guest. One should have it after he had had it. Were he, the host, have it first, he would lose his name and fame:

*kīrtim ca vā eṣa yaśas ca gṛhāṇām aśnāti/
yaḥ pūrvo 'tither aśnāti²*

The same idea is echoed in another *mantra* of the *Atharva-veda*:

aśitavaty atithān aśnīyat³

This is due to the firmly grounded belief that all sins of the person whose food the guest eats are destroyed (lit. burnt) :

*sarvo vā eṣa jagdhapāpmā yasyānnam aśnāti*⁴

Nobody should remain without food in the householder's house, enjoins the *Taittirīya-Brahmaṇa*:

*nāsya brāhmaṇo 'śnāsvān gr̥he vaset*⁵

Even Yama, the god of Death felt sorry for Brahmin guest being in his house without food for three nights and felt impelled to offer him three boons in expiation for this violation of tradition:

tisro rātrīr yad avātsīr gr̥he me

'naśnan brahmann atithir namasyah/

svasti me 'stu

*tasmāt prati trīn varān vṛṇīṣva/*⁶

The story as goes in the *Kaṭhōpaniṣad* is: Desirous of heaven the sage Vājaśravasa gave away all that he possessed. He had a son of the name of Naciketas. When the presents were being distributed filial anxiety entered the heart of Naciketas who was still a boy. He saw barren and consequently useless cows being given away as present. Joyless are the heavens to which repairs the person who gives such presents, thought he to himself. Taking himself to be the one who belongs to his father he asked him as to whom he would give. The father keeping quiet, he repeated the query twice and thrice. The infuriated father yelled out 'unto death I give thee'. Since these were the words of a ṛṣi they had to come true. The boy reached the abode of Yama, the god of death. Yama was away. He stayed in his house three nights without food. Yama was struck with remorse in noticing him in that state. As a recompense to the inconvenience undergone by him he offered him three boons. Yama knew that if a Brahmin guest were to stay in some one's house without food he would take away all his hope, expectation,

company with good men, the sons and the animals. The boy asked for the three boons. What these boons were and how Yama was compelled by the boy to answer the most fundamental of the questions rocking the human mind since ages as to whether something remains of a person after death or it is all closure for him is another matter. Emphasis here is that even Yama, the god of death is not exempt from the normal duty of honouring a guest, of all a guest of the Brahmin class.

In the case of *atithi-satkāra* it may be worthwhile to reproduce the story of an ascetic called Mudgala as found in the *Mahābhārata*. He was a man of limited means subsisting on gleaned corn ears, *śiloñcha*. He lived in Kurukṣetra engaging himself in sacrifices with oblations comprising *ghee*, food and the like (but not animal sacrifice). He would collect every fortnight a *droṇa* measure, approximately 32 or 64 seers rice. Whatever was left of it after deities and guests had been served he would use for himself and his family. The feeding of the guests led to so much of increase in the quantity of rice that even a hundred Brahmins could be fed with that. Mudgala's fame in feeding the guests reached in course of time the ears of the sage Durvāsas who approached him for food. He was received in all honours by the latter. He ate up the entire food. This he did for six times with no reaction of any sort from Mudgala who would feed him in all peace in complete disregard of his own hunger however acute. This pleased Durvāsas immensely. He blessed him that he would go to heaven in corporeal form, he having subdued the senses and been endowed with fortitude, self-control, tranquillity, compassion, truth and *Dharma*. As soon as he finished, a divine messenger, *devadūta*, appeared before him with an aerial car, *vimāna*, to take him to heaven. Then ensued the conversation between Mudgala and the divine messenger. Before repairing to heaven Mudgala wanted to know the good and the bad points of heaven. The divine messenger told him that everything was fine in heaven. It has all the joys, all the pleasures. The only bad thing about it is that the

celestial beings have to return to the earth after the fruit of their good actions has exhausted itself. Mudgala had no liking for such heaven. He wanted a state wherefrom there would be no return. That is Viṣṇu-loka said the divine messenger. Mudgala preferred it. He did not go to heaven. He continued on the earth subsisting as usual on the gleaning ears of corn and in a state of pure consciousness where praise or abuse did not matter to him. Lump of earth, stone, gold or pearl were the same for him. He attained *nirvāṇa*, salvation.

There was a proper code of conduct for guests. They could not just barge into somebody's house, known or unknown. They had to announce their arrival with timeworn socially acceptable terminology as is inferrable from the Durvāsas episode in the *Abhijñānaśākuntala*. On approaching Kaṇva's Āśrama he announces his arrival with the words *ayam aham bhoḥ*,⁷ 'O, here have I come.' On hearing this one of Śākuntalā's friends Anasūyā says "it seems to be the announcement by a guest", *atithīnām iva niveditam*. This announcement was sufficient to alert the host to get ready to receive the guest with proper courtesies like an honorific offering, *arghya*, the water for washing the feet, *pādyā* and the same for sipping, *ācamanīya* and a seat, *āsana*. He should be spoken to with sweet words, *ghṛtair bodhayatātithim*⁸. To receive the guest with full honours was the duty cast on the host. Kaṇva before leaving for pilgrimage for Somatīrtha entrusted this duty to his daughter Śākuntalā, *duhitaram śākuntalām atithisatkārāya niyujya* — *somatīrtham gataḥ*⁹. It was an offence not to carry out this duty. Being lost in the thoughts of Duṣyanta Śākuntalā did not fulfil this duty. That was the genesis of the curse that was pronounced on her by the fiery sage Durvāsas, the curse that changed the course of her life.

Any one come to one's house was not to be turned away, *na kañcana vasatau pratyācakṣīta*, that is a religious act, *tad vratam*, by whatever means be it. Enough food should be arranged for him, *tasmād yayā kayā ca vidhayā bahv annam*

prāpnuyāt. Whatever food is prepared, it is said, is prepared for him, *ārādhyasmā annam ity ācakṣate*.¹⁰

In Sanskrit there are two words for guest, one *atithi*, the other *abhyāgata*. Though they both are taken to mean guest, there is fine distinction in them, the distinction resting on the type of the guests. *Atithis* mean those guests who are not known to the host and *abhyāgatas* those who are known to him, vide comment of Vīrarāghava, Viśvanātha and Śukadeva: *atithayo 'jñātapūrvāḥ, abhyāgatā jñātapūrvāḥ* under the *Bhāgavata* prose passage *yas tv iha atithīn abhyāgatān va*.¹¹

One of the most interesting aspects of Indian social life has been the absence of hotels, motels and inns. There is no word in Sanskrit for them. Not that there was no movement. Pilgrimage was the necessary religious duty of the people and it would extend from one corner of the country to the other. It was the wish of every Indian in the ancient and the medieval period – it is fairly strong even in the modern period among the devout Hindus – to cover the four Dhāmans, the holiest of the holy places, each located in each direction, Puri in the East, Dwaraka in the West, Rameshwaram in the South and Badrinath in the North, besides visiting the seven cities Ayodhyā, Mathurā, Māyā, Kashi, Kanchi, Avantikā and Dwaravatī (Dwaraka) which would help him attain salvation. Apart from pilgrimages caravans of traders and merchants went about with their ware. The Hindi/Urdu word Sarai entered into Indian vocabulary in the medieval period. Prior to that, the wayfarer would be accommodated and fed by members of the society. When the sun would be setting a wayfarer approaching some one and not getting help from him in accommodation and food would, it was believed, walk away carrying with him the merit, *puṇya*, of that person:

There is a wellknown saying in Sanskrit: *ati sarvatra varjayet*, 'one should avoid excess everywhere'. The excessive regard and respect shown to guests, especially the unknown ones, would have led to antisocial elements exploiting the hospitality that would have occasioned the warning: *ajñātakulaśīlasya vāso*

deyo na kasyacit,¹² "one should not admit into one's house one whose family (background) and nature are not known". In the midst of all the hype for consideration and respect for guests, there had appeared warnings early enough that the guest is he who is good (lit. achieved goodness) *yaḥ śreṣṭhatām aśnute sa vā atithir bhavati*¹³ and a vile person, *asat*, is not shown respect that goes with guesthood *na vā asantam ātithyāyādriyante*¹⁴.

India has suffered enough for being overconsiderate to guests and extending hospitality to any and everybody without assessing their motives. While keeping up the tradition of generous hospitality, a note of caution is necessary in extending it to those whose motives are not clear.

References

1. 1.1.26.63
2. *Atharvaveda*, 2.6.8.25
3. *Ibid.*, 9.6.8.38
4. *Ibid.*, 9.6.7.24
5. *Taittirīya-Brāhmaṇa*, 1.1.4.
6. *Kāthopaniṣad*, 1.9.
7. Act IV, beginning
8. *Taittirīya-Brāhmaṇa*, 1.1.1.
9. *Abhijñānaśākuntala*, Act I, after verse 13.
10. *Taittirīyopaniṣad*, 1.10.
11. V.26.45
12. *Hitopadeśa*, 1.56
13. *Aitareya Āraṇyaka*, 1.1.1.
14. *Ibid.*

Prāyaścitta

Atonement

If a person commits a sin or an offence, there are two ways he can get out of it. The State can award punishment to him or he himself can court punishment. The latter is what is called *prāyaścitta*, atonement. The word has two components, *prāyas* and *citta*. Himādrī, an ancient lexicographer, explains each one of them lucidly. *Prāyas*, according to him, means *tapas*, religious austerity, bodily mortification and *citta* is *niścaya*, resolution, firm decision :

*prāyo nāma tapaḥ proktaṁ cittaṁ niścaya ucyaṭe/
taponiścayasaṁyogāt prāyaścittam itīryate//*

Prāyaścitta is firm resolve to court suffering in order to purify oneself of the sin or an offence or any untoward deed. This is a means for self-purification. Texts on law and morality have laid down different kinds of practices of self-mortification for different types of offences, their severity going up with the gravity of the offence, the gravest of the offences inviting the Cāndrāyaṇa-vrata, the hardest of the expiatory penances, which is regulated by the age of the moon, the period of its waxing and waning. In it the daily quantity of food which consists of fifteen mouthfuls at the time of the full moon, is diminished by one mouthful every day during the dark fortnight till it is reduced to zero at the new moon, and is increased in like manner during the bright fortnight.

It is through *prāyaścitta* that the sins get washed out : *prāyaścittam ca kurvanti tena tac chāmyate rajah.*¹

There are, however, certain offences for which there is no atonement. One such is ungratefulness, *kṛtaghnatā*. The *Rāmāyaṇa* puts the ungrateful, *kṛtaghna*, out of bounds of any kind of expiation. There is no expiation for him, says it : *kṛtaghne nāsti niṣkṛtiḥ*². The *Skanda-purāṇa* has a little mellowed approach towards him. For it those who are in love with their brother's wife merit no expiation :

*viśvāsaghātukānām ca kṛtaghnānām ca niṣkṛtiḥ/
bhatṛbhāryaratānām ca prāyaścittam na vidyate*//³

"There is expiation for those who betray trust, those also who are ungrateful but not for those who are in love with their brother's wife."

It all depends which one one considers to be more ghastly and deserving of outright condemnation with no possibility of redemption.

In this category is included the sin, the *pāpa*, one would have committed knowingly. According to the *Skanda-purāṇa* there is expiation for that which is committed unknowingly but not for the one committed knowingly :

*ajñānato hi yaj jātam pāpam tasya pratikriyā/
kathitā dharmasāstrajñaiḥ sakāmasya na vidyate*//⁴

Sometimes one may omit something or may overdo it. For that too one has to go in for *prāyaścitta*. Somebody may be performing the fire ritual involving pouring of oblations to the accompaniment of chanting of *mantras*. Before concluding the ritual he has to pour one oblation which is meant as an expiation for the omission or commission, *yad asya karmaṇo 'ty arīracam yad vā nyūnam ihākaram*, whatever I have done in excess, *aty arīracam*, in the ritual or not to the extent I should have, *nyūnam*. That oblation is known as *prāyaścittiya āhuti*, an oblation, *āhuti*, to atone for human failure, a sort of asking for forgiveness.

It is not that one is to atone for one's own sin. One can do so for that of some one else too. Kālidāsa in his *Raghuvamśa* makes a rather interesting point when he says that by begging for the sandals of Rāma that could serve as supreme divinities of the realm and firm in his loyalty to his brother, Bharata taking up abode at Nandigrāma and ruling the kingdom from over there as a trust seemed to atone for the sin of his mother :

*dṛdhabhaktir iti jyeṣṭhe rājyaṭṛṣṇāparāṇmukhaḥ/
mātuḥ pāpasya bharataḥ prāyaścittam ivākarot//⁵*

In recent times Mahatma Gandhi would resort to fast many a time when he found his people going astray from the path he would have expected them to follow. He would do it as atonement for his failure in making them follow the right path. In this he saw his own failure in that his appeal in maintaining calm he found falling flat. This was a self-inflicted punishment, the punishment for looking inwards to trace the cause of failure. The extreme form of this self-punishment as a form of *prāyaścitta* is found in the instance, already referred to in the context of *guru-bhakti* of Kumārilabhaṭṭa burning himself to death in the fire of chaff, a gruesome slow death, for repudiating the views of Prabhākaramiśra, his teacher of Mīmāṃsā.

In Christian churches there are confession rooms where people confess to their omissions and commissions in all their privacy to cleanse their minds of any guilt. In Jain tradition there is a special day called Kṣamāvaṇī-parva when the faithfuls beg forgiveness for anything untoward they would have permitted themselves.

References

1. *Rāmāyaṇa* Kiskindhākāṇḍa, 18.35.
2. *Ibid.*, 4.34.12.
3. *Vai. Kh. Ve. Ma.* 25.38.
4. 15.44
5. 12.19

Puṇyopārjana

To Earn Merit

Indian scriptures proclaim countless times that a person should earn merit, not only earn it but also accumulate it (*puṇya-sañcava*). That will be for his own good and that of the social order. The question is what is *puṇya*. Diligent search through the vast Sanskrit literature has furnished the following explanation of it which incidentally also hints at its etymology, vide : *punāty ātmānam pūyate 'neneti vā puṇyam'*. "*puṇya* is that which purifies one or by which one is purified". In simple words it would mean self-purification. Its mainstay is doing good to others while that of its opposite, *pāpa*, is tormenting them : *paropakāraḥ puṇyāya pāpāya parapiḍanam*. A synonym of it is *sukṛta* which literally means good deed, *su*=good, *kṛta*=deed.

The merit that one earns with good deeds does not stay with a person during the current life only; it follows him—if he believes in another birth, *punarjanma*—in the next birth as well. That is why if any thing good happens to a person for which there is no apparent, visible, cause, it is ascribed to the merit earned through good deeds in previous birth/s. The belief is strongly etched in Indian psyche.

The virtuous deeds; this is how *puṇya* is understood and the use of the plural number employed with the word, *puṇyāni*, many a time; would stand by a person, in whatever state he be, and save his life that would be at great risk. Says Bhaṭṭhari :

*vane raṇe śatrujalāgnimadhye
mahārṇave parvatamastake ca/
suptamī pramattamī viṣamasthitamī vā
rakṣanti puṇyāni purā kṛtāni//²*

“It is only the virtuous actions of his former lives which protect a man from injury and danger when he is thrown in the midst of a dense forest, a raging battlefield, a crowd of enemies, a deep ocean, a burning fire or when he is standing on the top of a mountain; or at the time when he is fast asleep, or drunk, or is placed in a dangerous or difficult position.”

It is through the force of the *puṇyas*, the merits accrued through good deeds done in earlier births that many an impossible event happen in one’s life. Even the thunderbolt which can tear the mountains apart turns as soft as flower, the fire turns like bed of lotuses cool through the rays of the moon, the edge of the sword like the tender arm of a pretty damsel :

*sambhavatīha bhūdharaṇipuh pavir api kusumanī
vahnir apīndupādaśīśiramī mṛdu kamalavanam/
khaḍgalatāpi cāruvanitāmṛdubhujalatā
prāṇīṣu pūrvajanmajanītāt sukṛtabalataḥ//³*

Whatever people get in life, be it intellect, beauty, sons, strength, wealth, fortitude—is all they do through the *puṇyas* earned by them :

*buddhim rūpam balam putrān vittam dhīratvam eva ca/
prāpnuvanti narā lokle nirjitam puṇyakarmabhiḥ//⁴*

The *Padma-purāṇa* also echoes the same idea :

*sarveṣām eva jīvanām dhanam iṣṭasamāgamah/
jāyate puṇyayogena yac cātmasukhakāraṇam//⁵*

“The wealth, the union with the loved ones and everything that gives happiness that all the beings get is through their *puṇyas*.”

Wealth and friends are the gift of *puṇyas*. So are riches, the birth and enjoyments.

Since *puṇya*, as explained above, is basically self-purification, it is necessarily not achieved by doing good to others only. There are other ways of achieving it as well. Practising austerities, *tapas*, is one such. Going on pilgrimage, visiting holy places, is another. Association with the good people, the saints and seers and listening to their sermons is still another. Serving parents, respecting teachers and all elderly people is still another. Reading the scriptures, singing hymns in praise of God is still another. The list goes on and on. As a matter of fact, it means any good or pious activity. This activity is bound to have salutary effect in that it can change the course of one's life. If the activity is a continuous one or is followed by many a similar one, their collective impact will be long lasting one extending the benefits accruing out of them, material or spiritual, to future life or lives.

Without the *puṇyas*, the merits accruing out of good deeds, one is not able to achieve one's wishes : *puṇyir vinā na hi bhavanti samīhitārthāḥ*⁶. Even fame is dependent upon it. The point can be very well appreciated with reference to a stanza in the *Cāṇakyanīti* where Yaśodā, the foster mother of Kṛṣṇa is bemoaning her lot in not gaining as much respect as the small hillock Govardhana which came to acquire it, on account of its having been held on a finger (by Kṛṣṇa) while she, in comparison, is suffering anonymity even while she is holding the carrier of the worlds on the tip of her breasts. She concludes her words with the statement *puṇyair yaśo labhyate*, "fame comes from luck (merits) :

*ūrdhvam ko 'pi mahīdharo laghutaro 'ṅgulyā dhr̥to līlayā
tena tvam divi bhūtale ca sataṁ govardhano gīyase/
tvam trailokyadharaṁ vahāmi kucayor agre na tad ganyate
kim vā keśava bhāṣaṇena bahudhā puṇyair yaśo labhyate//*

Everything in this world is transitory, the disease of old age kills even the handsome one, with union there is separation,

however long the life span, it has to come to an end one day. It is *puṇya* that is permanent. So carry on with it.⁸ It is the source of happiness and riches⁹. The wishes of the meritorious ones get fulfilled instantly; the *puṇyas* have in them the characteristics of the fruits of the desire-yielding tree : *sadya eva sukṛtaṁ hi pacyate kalpavṛkṣaphaladharmi kāṅkṣitam*¹⁰. It is those who have earned *puṇyas* get the following : a son who pleases his father by good actions, *yaḥ sucaritaiḥ pitaraṁ prīṇayet*; a wife who is entirely bent on looking after the welfare of her husband, *yad bhartur eva hitam icchati tat kalatram*; a friend who is equally sincere in adversity and prosperity, *āpadi sukhe ca samakriyaṁ mitram*¹¹.

The most prized companion in Indian tradition is a friend. It is through *puṇya* only that one can have him for himself. There is no more meritorious person than him who can engage himself in conversation with him, live with him and hold a friendly discourse with him :

*yasya mitreṇa sambhāṣā yasya mitreṇa saṁsthitiḥ/
yasya mitreṇa saṁlāpaḥ tato nāstiḥa puṇyavān*//¹²

The *Caturvargasaṅgraha* recounts in its inimitable style the qualities that accrue to a person who is meritorious, *puṇyavān* :

*paraḍraṇiṇiḥsprṇaḥ parakalatranīṣkautukaḥ
paraḥprāṇayavatsalaḥ paranikārabaddhakṣamaḥ /
paraḥstutiṣāradaḥ paraḥgūṇāpavādojjhitāḥ
parārṭiharaṇodyato bhavāti bhūri puṇyair naraḥ* //¹³

“It is through a large quantity of *puṇyas* that a person develops no longing for some one else’s wealth; no interest in some one else’s wife; is fond of love of some one else, is firm in forgiveness for the insult meted out to him by some one else, is expert in uttering words of praise for others, is bereft of speaking ill of others’ qualities (and) is ready to remove the suffering of others.” It is through *puṇya* again that people, though good in themselves, come to have association with

others of their type, *satām saṅgaḥ sadbhiḥ katham api hi puṇyena bhavati*.

Before the present discussion on *puṇya*, merit accrued through good deeds, is brought to a close it is worth its while to say that human nature being what it is there is perpetual conflict between piety and sin, *puṇya* and *pāpa*, the sources of happiness and unhappiness. They are as antithetical to each other as cold and heat. In this conflict whichever of the two is more forceful overpowers the other :

*sītoṣṇavat parasparaviruddhayor iha hi sukṛtaduṣkṛtayoh/
sukhaduḥkhaḥphalodbhavayor durbalam abhibhūyate balinā//*¹⁴

It is, therefore, imperative that one should pull out all stops to take to the path of *puṇya* and not give way to that of *pāpa* realizing what enormous number of benefits it yields.

Reference

1. *Sarvārthasiddhi*, 6.2
2. *Nītiśataka*, verse 97
3. *Padma-purāṇa*, 17.405
4. *Rāmāyaṇa*, 7.15.27
5. 36.78
6. *Śṛṅgāraśataka*, verse 17
7. 15.19
8. *Jānakīharaṇa*, 15.21
9. *Mahā-purāṇa*, 37.200.
10. *Raghuvamśa*, 11.50
11. *Nītiśataka*, verse 68
12. *Hitopadeśa*, 1.39
13. 1.17
14. *Dharmāmṛta*, 1.61

Satsaṅgati

Association with Good People

There is a well-known saying in English : “A man is known by the company he keeps.” If the company is good, one would imbibe good qualities, if it is bad, the bad ones. The same idea one comes across in the Sanskrit saying *saṁsargajā doṣaguṇā bhavanti*, the vices and the virtues owe their origin to association. Interesting it is, that the words *doṣa* is put first and *guṇa* afterwards in the above saying. And that is for no reason. There is a point here. Normally in the sequence of words *guṇa* should precede *doṣa*, that having respectability than its antithesis (*doṣa*), vide the Vārtika *abhyarhitam ca* under the Pāṇini *sūtra alpāctaram* (2.2.34). In violation of the above norm *doṣa* is put first in the saying above for, one is more prone to acquire; that is the human nature; the *doṣas*, the bad qualities than *guṇas*, the good ones. Since the latter are acquired with association with the good people, it is enjoined time and again to associate with them rather than the bad ones.

As is the fragrance of flowers, so would it be with water, cloth, sesame seeds and oil when they come into contact with them (flowers). It is contact that leads to emergence of qualities :

*āpo vastraṁ tilās tailaṁ gandho vāso yathā tathā/
puṣpāṇām adhvāsena tathā saṁsargajā guṇāḥ//*

It is the association with (the good) that brings about a change in the nature of beings. The parrots given to perching on

the tip of the forest trees and taking to flight even at the very sight of men begin repeating the name Rāma when they hear it being chanted by people around :

*kāntārabhūmisahamaulinivāsaśilāḥ
prāyaḥ palāyanaparā janavīkṣaṇena/
kūjanti te 'pi hi śukāḥ khalu rāmanāma
saṅgaḥ svābhāvaparivartavidhau nidānam// 2*

This easily reminds one of the episode of Śaṅkarācārya enquiring about the location of Maṇḍanamiśra's house from ladies drawing water from a well. They told him the house where the female ones of the parrots in the nests ensconced in the doors utter the words, 'is the world permanent or impermanent, has it originated on its own or has it been created by some one else'. Take it to be the house of Maṇḍana Paṇḍita', *janihi tan Maṇḍanaṇḍitaaukaḥ*.

A man becomes like him with whom he associates, or him he serves, or him like him he seeks to be :

*yādrśaiḥ saṁniviśate yādrśāns copasevate/
yādrḡ icchec ca bhavitum tādrḡ bhavati pūruṣaḥ//³*

When the people associate with the mean, their intellect would come down to their level, when they associate with the people of the middle level, so will become their intellect, when they associate with the good people, their intellect touches a high :

*buddhiś ca hīyate puṁsām nīcaiḥ saha samāgamāt/
madhyamair madhyatām yāti śreṣṭhatām yāti cottamaiḥ//⁴*

The same idea Bhartṛhari puts in a more flowery language in the verse :

*santaptāyasi saṁsthitasya payaso nāmāpi na śrūyate
muktākāratayā tad eva nalinīpatrasthitam rājate/
svātyām sāgaraśuktimadhyapatitam tan mauktikaṁ jāyate
prāyeṇādhamamadhyamottamajusām evānyidhā vṛttayaḥ//⁵*

“The water on the red hot iron simply goes non-existent. The same fallen on the leaf of a lotus plant assumes the appearance of a pearl. Again, the same one turns into a real pearl if it chances to drop into the mouth of a sea-shell in the (auspicious time of the Svāti star). It is, therefore, (to be inferred) that the bad, the mediocre and the good attributes of a thing are generally to be traced to the company it keeps.”

The best thing it is to avoid association with other people by all means (that is the panacea for all the ills). If it cannot be given up, it should then be made with the good people for that is medicine (for the disease of attachment to worldly things) :

*saṅgaḥ sarvātmanā tyājyah sa cet tyaktum na śakyate/
sa sadbhiḥ saha kartavyaḥ satām saṅgo hi bheṣajam//⁶*

It is the association with the good people that raises even an insignificant person to great heights. Even an insect ascends the head of the good people by being in contact with flowers, a stone also attains divinity when consecrated by the great :

*kīṭo 'pi sumanaḥsaṅgād ārohati satām śiraḥ/
aśmāpi yāti devatvam mahadbhiḥ supraṭiṣṭhitah//⁷*

The world is a poisonous tree but it yields two fruits of nectarine flavour, one, the tasting of nectar-like juice of poetry and the other, the association with the good people :

*saṁsāraṇiṣavṛkṣasya dve eva rsavat phale/
kāvyāmṛtasrasāsvādaḥ saṅgamaḥ sujanaiḥ saha//⁸*

Bhartṛhari in his *Nīṭisataka* recounts some of the wonderful after-effects of association with the good people :

*jāḍyam dhiyo harati siñcati vāci satyam
mānonnatim diśati pāpam apākaroti/
cetaḥ prasādayati dikṣu tanoti kīrtim
satsaṅgatiḥ kathaya kim na karoti puṁsām//⁹*

“Good company drives away the dullness of the intellect,

waters speech with truth, points (to the path of) increase of respect, roots out the sin (ful properties), enlightens the mind, spreads fame among quarters. Tell (me) what does not the association with the good people do to men?"

There was a king of the name of Ariga Deva. His son Pravin Singh fell in bad company. There were complaints galore about his wrongdoings. This made the king extremely worried. Since Pravin was still a boy, the king wanted him to change his habits and turn to be a good person so that he could be his worthy successor. He took him to his preceptor Somadeva who asked him to leave the boy with him in his Āśrama for six months. The king did as ask. The boy stayed with the preceptor who would always ask him to do for him something or the other. Three months passed this way. The preceptor dinned into his ears all the good advice he could muster. Slowly it came to have its impact on the young one. One day the preceptor said that God has his presence everywhere. Keep in mind that if he were to permit himself any sin, he would definitely reap its fruit for God would be watching him. Whatever the inducement, he should desist from anything bad, and feel the presence of God. One day he (the preceptor) asked the young one to kill a hare. The young one tried hard to obey the orders of the preceptor but could not. Whenever he would try to wring its neck, he would see God before him. Unable to kill the hare he went to his preceptor and told him of his difficulty. The preceptor took him in his arms and told him that he had passed the test of good conduct and love of beings. The young one went back to the king and proved himself to be his worthy successor.

There is another story which also illustrates as to how association with the good transforms the life of people. A group of ascetics reached a village in the course of its wanderings. It was a cold winter evening. The ascetics were looking for a place to stay for the night. They approached a wealthy person of the village who told them that he had two shops, one was full of ware while the other was just empty. They could well take up

the other (empty) one as the night shelter. The ascetics were three in number. Of them two were younger who went to bed immediately on entering the shop. The elderly one did sleep but his sleep was interrupted for no reason. He thought since he was up anyway, let him not go to sleep again and go in for meditation and the recitation of the name of God. After some time he heard some noise coming from the adjoining shop. He called out as to who there was. The people inside the shop looked around and found an ascetic engaged in saying prayers. Sensing no fear from him they approached him and pre-senting themselves to him said. "We are thieves. We have come to empty the entire shop of its contents." The ascetic told them to desist from such a nefarious act. This had an electric effect on the thieves. The ascetic gave them a discourse on good conduct and the sins that accrue from the bad one. Time passed by. It was early morning. The wealthy man, the owner of the shops, thinking that the ascetics may be in need of some thing, came to the shops. He saw both the shops with some unknown people surrounding an elderly ascetic in the shop with no ware. On enquiry from the unknown ones it was found that they were thieves and had got converted to good people under the advice of the elderly ascetic taking up a vow never to indulge in theft any time in life. The wealthy man prostrated before the elderly ascetic and said as to how a little bit of act of goodness on his part in providing shelter to the ascetics had saved his entire ware. The association with the good really works wonders.

With such a plethora of benefits accruing, it is in the interest of people that they associate with the good people. That is why the ancient texts put such an emphasis on cultivating this quality.

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3. *Mahābhārata*, Udyogaparvan, 36.13

4. *Ibid.*, Vanaparvan, 1.29
5. *Nīṭisāṭaka*, verse 67
6. *Hitopadeśa*, 4.96
7. *Ibid.*, Kathāhāmukha, 44
8. *Ibid.*, 1.146
9. verse 23

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He has the distinction of having been Visiting Professor in five Universities on three Continents. Among his many foreign students the most prominent is Her Royal Highness Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, the Princess of Thailand. He has attended and chaired a number of national and international conferences and seminars and delivered more than a hundred lectures in Universities and institutions of higher learning in Europe, North America, Southeast Asia and the Far East.

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